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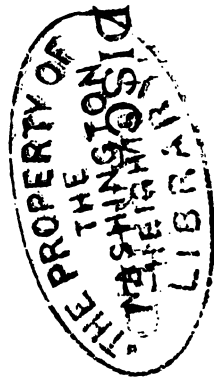


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BARBARA'S VAGARIES

BY

MARY LANGDON TIDBALL



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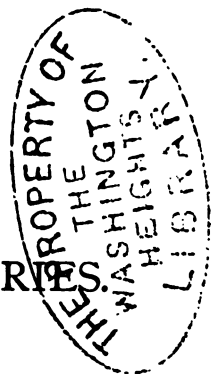
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BARBARA'S VAGARIES



I.

As Dennis Wainwright rested in a waltz, he found himself the most observed young man in the pavilion. Dennis knew his own advantages, but was wise enough to remember that he did not usually make such a profound impression; and he became aware that his partner in the dance caused this temporary sensation. Though not usually observant, he now closely regarded his companion, and said to himself: "No mistake about it, she does look queer—but she is a pretty creature, and a capital dancer."

The girl that stood at his side was a well-made young woman of a vigorous growth.

The very motions of her body showed an eagerness, a strength, and an uncouthness more to be expected in an athletic boy. Her dress was so unlike that of the conventional fashionables in the great pavilion that she could not help being remarked. The young woman seemed to have an eye for color, quite too much so, as the very gay effect of blues, purples, reds, and greens, assembled in her costume, testified. The cut of the whole was bizarre, and as though the daring creation of an ambitious country modiste.

To make the dress still more conspicuous, a remarkable flow of light hair fell, unrestrained by present-day conventional laws, to some distance below her waist; and, not content with its natural flow, had been crinkled and *crêpéd* until every individual hair stood out at a wide angle from her shoulders.

Quite unconscious of looking queer, of being especially observed, or, in fact, of any-

thing except the novel excitement of her surroundings, she looked up at her partner with a half-rebuking glance of inquiry, and Dennis was not slow to discover that this energetic young lady had no idea of losing another round of the waltz, so he obligingly drew her again into the circle of dancers. When the music ceased, she tossed back her long hair with a reckless movement of head and shoulders. "Well?" another upward glance and a short laugh—"what is it—or are you always solemn at the seashore?" Now Dennis was in the habit of being considered a little too noisy, too boisterous, and he colored when this North Carolina girl found him solemn. At this moment they neared the windows looking to the bay, and caught a glimpse of the full moon reflected there; not giving him time to reply, she dropped his arm, and, with an exclamation half-thrown over her shoulder, slipped through one of the sliding doors that led to the promenade, and running

along its length a few steps, reached a narrow pier which jutted abruptly into the bay near that corner of the pavilion.

For a moment Wainright hesitated, but his real good-heartedness made him follow the girl, and he caught up with her as she reached a boat-house built on the end of the pier. She smiled at him, a pretty smile, as though it was quite a matter of course that he was still near, and, after gazing a moment at the dimpling water, once more turned and slowly sauntered back to the dancing-room. At its entrance they met her good-natured old uncle; and the young girl, placing both hands on his arm, looked up into his face with such a radiant, fearless happiness in her own, that Wainwright—standing aloof—once more admired her.

A little group of young officers, bachelor lieutenants of the fort, had come into his close neighborhood, and one, putting his hand on Wainwright's arm, now drew him to them, with bantering reproaches for

keeping this new sensation all to himself.

Dennis bit his lip and looked a little sulky, hardly knowing whether or not to believe they were making game of him. The young men persisted in their friendly attack, and as they had by this time drawn him to the boat-house, he dropped on one of its rustic seats, and surrendered to the pelting questions of five gay tormentors. "Who is she? Where did I find her? Is she a fixed star, or just a flying meteor? Well, let a fellow breathe once and think twice between questions, and it will be easy enough to tell the little there is to tell." So, after a pause: "I was hunting last summer in the mountains of North Carolina, near the French Broad, you know. Two or three other Washington men were with me, and once we turned a little aside from hunting-trails, and rested at the little town of Harfield. Not much of a place perhaps, but we were hungry, and thought it deserved to be famous for

its chickens, hams, peaches and—ah! of course—its pretty girls. There is not much talk about ‘blue-blood’ exclusiveness, and all that, in Harfield; such family questions they leave to the towns east, west, north, and south of it: but pretty girls—pshaw!” And Dennis ended his, by this time rather enthusiastic, rhapsody with a prolonged whistle, that was echoed in chorus by his group of listeners. Dennis lounged in a rustic *tête-à-tête*, with hands thrust deeply into his pockets, and was tantalizingly silent for a space long enough to rouse the ire of his five listeners; but, once more reminded of them by digs in his ribs and a few choice epithets, he added,

“Well, that’s about all.”

“But what of the sensation? When does she come in?”

“Oh! she was one of them.”

More howls from a, by this time, exasperated small crowd, and Dennis good-naturedly continued, “You men make much

of a very small matter. The girls of Harfield live in a healthy atmosphere; a pretty steep country, you know, and plenty of exercise over the worst mountain roads. They ride fine horses, and they ride them well. They are young athletes, and they have the finest figures—the finest complexions—the finest eyes—the finest hair—” but here he came to a full pause again, this time thoroughly sulky and silent, after the laughter that capped his latest.

“ Hair—hair—oh, yes—hair! Give us some more of that, Wainwright; hurrah for eloquence!”

There were well-applied coaxing, cajoling, and threats before this spoiled young man could be induced to finish his report of last summer's hunt. Some cleverly expressed incredulity brought him to the defence again.

“ It is all true. The people of Harfield are frank, hospitable, and good neighbors. I never saw a better-behaved, better-heart-

ed, merrier set of madcaps than those girls. They have a half-wild, natural way with them that is all right there, and you do not notice that the dress is a little peculiar—their own idea of dress, in fact. I must acknowledge there is a little too much eye for color; but I did not even know that until to-night. Miss Barbara Dexter may not have the approval of your Southern and Northern belles, nor of their mammas; but I am proud and glad to know her as she is.”

With this last, rather defiant, flourish Dennis rose, but found his way barred; and the young men, rather quieted by the serious manner in which Dennis had told his story, now begged to be presented to Miss Dexter. After some hesitation he consented, and, choosing two from among the number, went in search of her.

Before the evening was half over, Barbara Dexter had more partners than she needed, and was eyed askance by coteries

of ladies who were seated on three sides of the pavilion. Little derisive smiles and occasional out-spoken criticism followed her as she waltzed. Of all this Barbara was unconscious, until, in a crowded dance, her conspicuous locks caught upon the button of an officer's coat as she whirled past him in the waltz. Two couples came to a sudden stop, in the midst of some confusion; the shock even brought Barbara down on one knee, and she gave utterance to a quite natural outcry of pain and dismay.

The gentleman, really troubled at the havoc he had innocently helped to make, gravely offered apology for presuming to touch the streaming locks, as he with some trouble disentangled them from his button. Barbara's partner, and a dozen others, rushed to her assistance, while Barbara, now really conscious of a scene, rose and met the gaze of Mr. Marcou.

A painful blush covered face, neck, arms; and she received his eager regret with a

pitiful little smile that was itself a plea for pardon. Meanwhile a dozen young ladies stood partnerless and apart, with grave, averted faces, not interested in the small comedy; while their mothers and chaperons, on-looking, agreed to still more disapprove of this young person.

Barbara Dexter, crestfallen for the moment, was carried away to her old uncle, and, the music ceasing shortly after, she passed into an interior drawing-room, which communicated with the main halls, interrupting them, indeed.

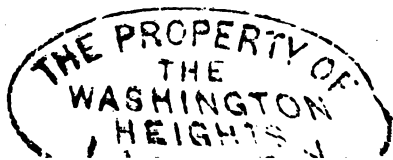
For the parlor of such an immense hotel, this was almost a cosey room, its low, irregular shape being broken at one corner-end by a very wide and deep alcove, and another corner filled by an out-jutting, well-bemirrored angle.

One side of this drawing-room was all of cathedral glass, half of it looking into the dance-pavilion, the other half into the still larger dining-pavilion: and various doors,

at one end and along one side, opened into most inviting smaller apartments; one a music-room; one fitted for a game of pool; and one with desks, suggestive, cosey, and feminine.

The drawing-room itself had not the usual stiff appointments of set chairs and sofas, but chairs of every fashioning, and in delightful, careless disarrangement, were scattered in groups, filled by a well-dressed crowd. Some of these, invalids, drawn to the blazing hearth, itself a tiled and mirrored place, toasted themselves and compared symptoms of invalidism, or discussed the merits of Nassau, St. Augustine, or St. Thomas, at this season. Remote from these, other guests of the hotel stood, lounged, or chatted, with here and there among them a goodly number of officers and their wives from the fort—while, on certain *tête-à-tête* divans, lounged young couples too pleasantly engrossed for interruption.

It was still an early hour; for the mu-



sicians from the fort dispersed every night during the season before eleven. Many of the dancers and chaperons now drifted to this room, and thronged it even unusually.

Barbara had some difficulty in making her way. Approaching the alcove, she saw, a little back in its depths, the officer who had so lately put a stop to her dance, and also recognized the young girl with whom he had been dancing at the time. He was bending over her chair in quiet conversation, and both of them, raising their eyes at the same instant, saw Barbara standing behind several politicians, who here quite filled the space between the alcove and a near pillar. Barbara remained an instant, prisoned between the broad backs of these substantial black figures and the alcove.

Young Marcou and Miss MacFarland exchanged glances, and as she, with a little assenting nod, dismissed him, he hurried to the relief of Barbara, saluted her gravely,

and, offering her his arm, made way through the little throng.

"Where shall I take you, Miss Dexter? Our accident has already made us a little known to each other. Mr. Wainwright is my guest, and I am Louis Marcou."

Barbara, who always received kindness like a child, glowed once more with happiness, showed a friendly face to Marcou, and offered him a shapely brown hand. Wainwright, walking from an opposite direction, now joined them, and the girl was soon again surrounded by a little group of gallants, whose voices were more than once raised in such a burst of merriment that the well-bred chaperons turned every now and then, with deliberate gaze, to this gay party, and always turned away with exchanging glances.

Here was a young woman absurdly gotten up in dress, quite independently alone; from their point of view, conspicuously ill-bred, or, as they expressed it, "with the

manners of the house-maid to the coachman." The young officers and beaux of a season discovered in her an altogether different personage—"A merry madcap—a gay comrade—queerly dressed, to be sure, but what of that?"



II.

MEANWHILE Marcou bowed himself away and returned to the quiet corner he had left a few moments since.

He hesitated, finding there, not only Miss MacFarland, but two favored gallants of the season ; Mr. Bradley, a Philadelphian, rather heavy and dull, but well dressed and full of fashionable mannerisms ; also his friend Mr. Edgerton, a practised beau.

Miss MacFarland had observed Marcou's approach, and he interpreted a welcome in the little change that passed over her singularly expressive face.

It would be difficult to define Katharine MacFarland's charm. Her father, Perry MacFarland, scholar, student, writer, had been sent to Nassau by his physician, but

en route, their baggage being detained, they had lingered here waiting for it.

Finding himself in a good company, among them several kindred spirits; pleased with *entourage* of watering-place pleasures and the old fort; also meeting good weather, he had lingered with his wife and daughter, still unwilling to go farther south.

Mrs. MacFarland, like other Bostonians, thought well of Boston. She also thought amiably of many another elsewhere, for the MacFarlands loved an occasional trip abroad, and were well travelled in their own country. Mrs. MacFarland's home, besides being the most exclusive, was known to be the most delightful in Boston, frequented by its youth, its fashion, and its men of letters.

The daughter, Katharine, was somewhat a puzzle to this mother, who suspected her of an unworldliness she herself entirely disapproved; she yet acknowledged that the

girl's daintiness well became her. Katharine, to her father, was like a poem whose pages he still turned, and whose mystery he might to-morrow, but not yet to-day, unravel.

This slender maid restored to MacFarland some of the illusion, the poetry, the romance of youth; illusion, poetry, romance that he had resigned unwillingly—slowly. Katharine MacFarland was not beautiful, her charm was something outside of that. Sweet eyes, serious, often downcast in reverie, looked from under eyelids whose lovely curves, whose whiteness, whose long, dark lashes, drooping and up-curved like a child's, guarded well her reticence. The hair, growing low, over a smooth, wide brow, parted in heavy locks, and waved behind the small ears. The sensitive mouth was delicately shaped, and contradicted a pathetic droop of its corners by the proudly curling upper lip, which was much shorter than is usual. The nose and chin had each a little upward tilt—the throat all curves and whiteness.

Her manner was uncertain. A gentle reserve sometimes attracted, sometimes repelled. Women usually loved her.

She received the admiration of gentlemen with a quiet that sometimes piqued to greater fervor, sometimes was provokingly maddening, for with it, a little dreamy absent-mindedness often left a doubt whether she had really heard the words addressed to her. Even in rare moments of high spirits, her very playfulness was tempered with a soft, gentle half-restraint. She had, of course, been trained to the usual accomplishments of young ladies, but her passionate fondness for art had turned her whole being in that direction.

Mr. MacFarland, approving everything Katharine loved, fitted for her a charming studio, and here she spent days apart in a dreamy enthrallment, but wakened to the knowledge that this life was causing her mother serious unhappiness, and gradually withdrew from the studio, sometimes lock-

ing herself from it with a smothered sigh as she went out into the world.

For the rest—it became the fashion to adore Katharine MacFarland. To her adorers she gave but little; a few languid smiles, some playful sparkle of wit, not often parrying the reproaches of a too ardent admirer with quiet scorn almost at once recalled; again, she would persuade another that it was not really herself he so fancied, but that she had beguiled him by being a good listener.

Marcou's lip curled with an amused smile as he found this young lady at her usual occupation.

She rose as he approached, but not before he had noticed the pathetic droop of the corners of her mouth, and the little, tired, impatient half-sigh with which she turned to him.

"You have been sent for me?" And, as she placed her hand on his arm, smiled graciously on the two forsaken, while, with a

mischievous sparkle in her eye, deprecating her mother's jealous care. Marcou and Katharine approached the group where Mrs. MacFarland and several other chaperons of belles more or less attractive were rising from their seats and about to break up the evening. In a low tone he reminded her that to-morrow would be one of his busiest days in the section room, where he was engaged on a drawing of some engineering work, and begged that she would walk with him on the sands before breakfast.

"Colonel Bent keeps the class busy, and for my part I am glad—we graduate in May, you know."

"And then, Mr. Marcou?"

"Why, then, I suppose, my regiment; and, for a present abiding-place, the mouth of the Columbia."

"And then—do you, perhaps, relapse into the proverbial ease and idleness of garrison life, being deprived of Colonel Bent and his incentives to industry?"

"There would have been some show of justice if you had aimed that little shaft at Dundas," said Marcou, turning to another young officer who approached, cap in hand, to make his parting salutations. Dundas was a favorite, and quite enjoyed his *nom-de-guerre*—"Prince of Grumblers." Being really a good officer, his affectation of martyrdom was ludicrously at variance with a frank countenance and soldierly bearing.

"Marcou has been voted the laurel wreath of his class," he now retorted, "and will be expected to sustain a reputation so responsible by some show of industry, when he returns to the regiment. We shall look for, at least, rumors of his coming book on 'Grand Strategy.' My reputation, being the reverse of his, is easy to sustain."

Encouraged by Miss MacFarland's air of sympathy, Dundas continued,

"I put it to your sense of common justice, that Marcou deserves to be banished for this

behind-my-back assault—banish him and take me instead—or else send him home with me now. Bent's effort to cram me with knowledge to-day has been exhausting, and I need an arm." Katharine smilingly released her hand from Marcou's arm, but he would not be dismissed until he had reminded her of her half-promise to walk with him on the beach. She, turning to her mother, received a smiling consent, and so it was arranged, the young men soon after bowing themselves away. Mrs. MacFarland followed their retreating figures with a critical, but not unfriendly, gaze.

Louis Boniface Marcou was a sightly and noticeable young man. He was of good height, and carried his supple, well-made figure with an easy indolence that disguised unusual strength; his face, rather rugged than handsome, a clear eye, and a healthy color, vouched for a regular life, if not a good conscience.

A certain reserve of manner did not pre-

vent him from being well liked. Having been reared in a school of old-fashioned politeness, the habit of deference—deference to all women—was habit still.

Often he had seen his father rise from conversation in a gay coterie, and hold the door for a little ten-year-old daughter to pass through, with as much deference as though she had already reached the bloom of womanhood. What passed for tact, among coarse-minded women, came really from Marcou's good heart. His voice, in usual conversation, was low, distinct, and well modulated.

On his father's side of the house he was French, some generations back, the family still keeping many traditions, customs, and its Roman Catholic religion.

His father, Louis the elder, had made a romantic marriage, eloping with pretty Dorothy Boniface, and so separating her forever from her puritanical father, old Peter Boniface.

Peter owned an immense estate in Wheeling. The new railroads, then being projected, were an offence to him, for they had an eye upon his property, and had already cut off a goodly slice, to Peter's unutterable rage.

Marcou, a brilliant young civil-engineer, was their surveyor, and while in the very act of cutting off some of Peter's cherished land, he stole the heart of pretty Dorothy. Old Peter swore that the bigoted Roman Catholic young rascal should never have his Dorothy, but he awoke one morning to find her gone away, and he would never consent to see her again. This romance Louis, the son, learned after he came of age, but he had never seen any of his mother's people until now.

III.

THE rooms of the hotel opened also to broad piazzas, running its enormous length. In the winter and early spring much of this length of veranda was glassed in, looking upon the water-front like a large conservatory.

Katharine MacFarland, always an early riser, came upon the veranda from her window before the sun was up, feeling secure from interruption, and eager to catch the morning lights and shades, with sunrise on the water.

She placed easel and canvas, and in her loose artist blouse was soon, as often before, entirely engrossed in a sketch. She was not the only early riser, however. Barbara Dexter, who, with her mountain habits, was awake also, and ready to meet whatever the

day could bring, dressed, and in turn stepped to the veranda.

It happened that the two young girls occupied adjoining rooms, and Barbara, at her window, stood just behind the young artist, who had thrown herself back in her chair, the palette poised in one hand, the other falling at her side, almost losing its hold on her brush. The sun, just risen, in the midst of light clouds, was making a glory on the water, which blazed and purpled to their feet.

"That is not like ours," exclaimed Barbara; "ours is all far away, in rosy gray mists, behind the mountains."

Katharine, roused by this bell-like voice, turned, and with a long gaze regarded her visitor. She quite forgot the girl's personality, but, in her absent-minded way, gazed at this picture of barbaric color framed in the window, as though about to step out. It did step out, and a frank laugh roused Katharine out of her dream-life to reality,

and the commonplaces of courteous greeting. It did not enter Katharine's mind to wait for a formal introduction to this perfectly natural, if rather wild, country lass, neither did she take it amiss when Barbara leaned over her canvas with an exclamation of delight. It was like the truthful flattery of a child, and instead of interrupting, soothed her.

She resumed her brush, and quietly, steadily painted while Barbara, kneeling beside her, watched the work in silent wonder, neither of them speaking.

The sun rose higher and higher, these enthusiasts not regarding time until the opening of a shutter startled them, and Mrs. MacFarland, looking a little displeased, appeared, watch in hand. Immediately, recollection flushed Katharine's pale face with a delicate glow, and the just-now artist stood, a culprit.

"Oh, is it late? I did not think it could be late."

Mrs. MacFarland, without a glance at Barbara, turned the face of her watch to her daughter, and silently returned to her room. Katharine, with real contrition, gathered her materials, and, casting a kindly, absent smile at Barbara, hastened to make her walking toilet, yet knowing well now she had broken her engagement. A few moments later she encountered Mr. Marcou, just as he was leaving the breakfast-room.

It would not be quite truthful to say he looked undisturbed—for had not this young girl caused him to promenade the drawing-room quite solitary for a long hour? and had she not humiliated him in the eyes of all the gay bachelors coming in one by one to their breakfast, and passing him with sly allusions to his forlorn condition? Even had he not been obliged to receive the condolences of his especial aversion, Mrs. Gregory?

The sight of Katharine, as she swiftly

advanced to meet him in an expectant, eager way quite unusual, thrilled him, and he almost turned to meet her, but at that instant Mrs. Gregory thrust her portly, well-to-do figure between them, and, with smiling suaveness, hoped Katharine had enjoyed her early walk with Mr. Edgerton. Marcou did not wait to hear the surprised denial, nor see Katharine's look of protest, as, gravely saluting both ladies, he rapidly walked through the main hall, and so out to his military duties.

Mrs. Gregory was sweetly and at once convinced of her mistake on Katharine's assurance, and as Mr. and Mrs. MacFarland at this moment appeared, on their way to the breakfast-room, she detained them, and in a flattering manner invited all three to a boating-party, which was to be given in her honor the following Saturday.

Katharine, with a cool inclination of her head, passed into the breakfast-room after her mother had accepted the invitation.

Mrs. Gregory was once tersely described by an eccentric Major Jones Brown-Jones as "Head-devil of San Francisco Society." She prided herself on being able to manage all men, all women, and all occasions. She was at the front of everything social: if the founding of an orphan asylum, Mrs. Gregory was at once chief manager; if a charity ball, she was receiving hostess, and, all smiles, the radiant dispenser of the choicest young ladies, her assistants, to aspiring partners; if a bachelor's German, she not only received guests, but distributed favors. Ill-fortune befell the young man who did not make himself useful to Mrs. Gregory on demand. If his social career had not yet begun, he continued to be—nobody. If he was already launched on the tide, his little bark came to anchor, and no breeze any more filled his flapping sails.

As for the young ladies, they worshipped Mrs. Gregory. She was most wise in selecting a body-guard of belles, and they

were always the successful young ladies of a season. It was well understood by the dancing young men that their first homage was to be paid to Mrs. Gregory, their next to her young ladies. A *débutante* who entered the circle of belles "receiving" with that great woman found that, by a magic wave of Mrs. Gregory's fat hands, the beaux scrambled pell-mell to this newest favorite, and the bewildered young bud opened wide her astonished eyes to find herself, at once, a full-blown rose. Mrs. Gregory understood well this art of managing young ladies of a season, and, even almost better still, she knew the art of well-arranged, well-timed flattery.

Potts, the rather vulgar owner of a magnificent country-seat in the neighborhood of San Francisco, soon learned, under her soft persuasions, that he not only possessed the rarest taste for entertaining a large company in a ten days' pleasuring; but that he was also Mrs. Gregory's chosen and

close friend, that she had always admired his unusual judgment, and that she foresaw a future for him in the senate at Washington.

The old admiral she predestined to provide a select breakfast on his flagship was more than ever convinced that Farragut was altogether second to him. The most sweetly flattered old gossips flocked to Mrs. Gregory's receptions, sure to hear, from her soft lips, the latest funny thing about the poor old admiral who had just bowed himself away, or freshest blunder of poor old blundering Potts, and gathered many delicious morsels of scandal always first heard there. The fame of this great personage extended even to Washington city, where she occasionally spent a season, and where some of her most masterly managing was managed.

She was here, now, with her usual six young ladies, skilfully chaperoned, and Marcou was among the young men that

needed managing. She had not quite gotten him under control ; indeed, had to acknowledge that he was restive. She had tried him with every blandishment, from grossest flattery to tender suggestions of admiration, but Marcou hardly concealed a polite disgust. She had tried entertaining scandal with even worse success, for while a favored small circle could listen a whole morning, entranced, to delightfully ill-natured things said of all their best friends, Marcou could never be made to hear a scandal or understand personal allusions. A cold, averted face was the only indication of displeasure, and shortly he would take his leave. To her young charges he was polite ; indeed, especially he felt bound to befriend and care for one of them, his cousin, Helen Boniface.

The water-party for Saturday, the only holiday of "those poor lieutenants," was to be given on the yacht of Jolly Black, the great millionaire, who had only been in the

harbor three days ; but already, his yacht, his feasts, worthy of Lucullus, and his own pudgy, good-natured self were all at the disposal of the great Mrs. Gregory. She was to furnish guests for the water-party, and he, the feast.

IV.

A MERRY party that morning breakfasted at the table adjoining the MacFarlands. Barbara Dexter and her uncle were among the number, and Barbara seemed to have simply resumed her gay proceedings of the night before. Hazard and Payne, the two exquisites of the class, were seated there; also Dennis Wainwright and Dundas. Barbara's excellent spirits were encouraged to their utmost by the two latter, and she furnished distraction enough for the surrounding tables.

Major Jones Brown-Jones, having seen Perry MacFarland through the glass slides, strolled in to engage him for an hour at the club.

Brown-Jones had a long, odd-looking

countenance, as eccentric as his character. A swarthy complexion and straight black hair helped to give his face a sombre appearance, and his nose, of even monstrous length, added no little to its solemn expression. His thin mouth was inclined to draw up in a mocking smile, and nothing escaped his seemingly unobservant eyes.

"Who is this wild coot you have here now?" he asked of MacFarland. "She has come to scoop up the whole garrison of officers, and walk off with them."

Barbara did at that moment walk off with the two young lieutenants Hazard and Payne, gayly shaking her locks, as she accepted their challenge to see them safely in to guard-mounting, and leaving Wainwright and Dundas to follow.

As Barbara, with her attendant train, neared the fort, by crossing a narrow bridge over the moat, she approached a low doorway which, like the mouth of a cave, opened to a dark interior.

Here she at first declined to go any farther, amid the laughing remonstrances of the young officers.

"Let me be your guide, Miss Dexter," drawled Dundas; "this is only the torture-chamber, and I am its usual occupant. Bent sends me here to repent with a musket across my back, when I have missed forty pages of history in a morning. His latest victim is in there now."

At that moment they passed through the postern gate to an open casemate, and a sentinel, walking guard, presented arms to the young officers. Barbara, unused to military forms, was really appalled by this majestic, solemn figure, at its lonely promenade, surrounded as it was by heavy masonry within the arches of this prison-like chamber. Glancing over her shoulder, she was reassured to see Wainwright's laughing face just behind her. After passing through two of these apparently subterranean brick-floored chambers, they emerged

in a blaze of sunlight, and Barbara recovered her saucy spirits as they conducted her through the fort.

"That is where old Bent has me under lock and key," said Dundas, pointing out the first row of casemates. "When I haven't a ball and chain around one leg, I am to be found digging an underground passage in that third casemate, which is precisely like the one we entered just now. My sufferings have attracted the notice of some leading newspapers, and all the young ladies pity my sorrows." Barbara by this time began to understand his gay complainings, and suggested that he was out on a ticket-of-leave.

They had now reached the parade-ground, and Barbara, having to be initiated into the mysteries of guard-mounting, instructed each of the young officers in turn to give his own original description and definition of the ceremonies, so that she, as first professor of the early morning studies, might pronounce upon their merits.

Having commended Dundas, as best non-sense man, she dismissed them to their section-room duties, for which they were all ready; and Wainwright led Barbara out by a path leading through groves of live oak, past the house of the commandant, and so on through the great sallyport. A wide bridge crossed the moat from this gate, and on it they lingered, idly watching the rippling of transparent green tide-water that, with a perceptible current, flowed around corners of crooked bastions, and musically lapped the sides of its stone bed.

When they reached the promenade of solid masonry that bounded the water-battery they found the place deserted, and Barbara ran here and there among the heavy arches, now mounting a huge gun-carriage and peering through its embrasure to the beach and bay beyond; now waking echoes with her fresh, young voice; now playing hide-and-seek among the pillars, and springing from a successful ambuscade to seize the bewil-

dered Dennis's hand and race a long, swift race—the whole length of the great walk ; now to laugh at his expense, when the run was over, and, all breathless, they sat at the foot of a flight of stone steps.

As soon as Dennis could draw breath and speak he began a little remonstrance, speedily cut short by Barbara's mocking laughter as she once more left him behind and mounted the stone steps of a low parapet. He found her gazing out seaward, at the countless sails putting in to the bay. She was seated on a huge gun ; her hat lay on the short, tufty grass at her feet, and the gusty sea-breeze lifted her hair in a gay confusion. She was so evidently content, with herself and all the world, that Wainwright did not speak or in any way interrupt her for a time.

Barbara's period of unusual quiet was broken by the rustling of silken skirts mounting the stone steps behind her, and she turned, quite unabashed, to meet the gaze of Mrs. Gregory, or, rather, not to meet

her gaze, for she, with the latest thing in long-handled, gold-rimmed eye-glass, looked quite through and beyond Barbara and, with leisurely steps, interposed her substantial figure between the girl and her view of the bay and shipping. There was a general lifting of hats, as several gentlemen in Mrs. Gregory's group recognized in Barbara their entertaining partner of the evening before. This brought upon the young girl a peculiar and deliberate gaze from the woman of resources, and with a long-drawn, entirely sweet, but suggestive "ah—!" she led her young people back by the way they had come, bowing charmingly to Wainwright as she passed him, and leaving Barbara in a half wonderment.

Returning to the hotel by the sands, which lay in an unbroken stretch before them, she dismissed Wainwright and went at once to smooth her crazy locks; but shortly strolled down again, humming a little happy song to herself.

She entered the inner drawing-room, and, being full of a traveller's spirit of enterprise and investigation, passed from there through the writing-room to the main corridor, and at last into the great drawing-room that faces the water. Its entire front was glass, the upper sashes stained, the lower ones carefully shaded with amber silk. This huge room was saved, also, from an uncomfortable largeness, by a broken arrangement of furniture, some hangings, and also a few of the cosey, inviting desks seen in the writing-room. At one of these Katharine MacFarland was seated, writing. Barbara had at once admired, then liked Miss MacFarland, and now it was her natural instinct to seat herself on a low divan in Katharine's neighborhood, and, for employment, turn the leaves of a novel she carried.

Sitting thus, she was half turned to the water, and her attention equally divided between the passing sails and watching Katharine's quiet, averted profile; and so the

book lay open on her lap. As she gazed, every detail of Katharine's figure was unconsciously fixed in Barbara's mind: the simple lines of her dark cloth dress, fitting to perfection the supple, elegant figure of the town-bred girl; the linen showing above the high-throated cloth; the hair compactly coiled; the handsome foot, booted for walking; hands, the perfection of daintiness, well shaped and well cared for.

Barbara was all the time half conscious of a buzz of conversation in her close neighborhood; but a heavy pillar, or, rather, an ample chimney and fireplace, which descended from ceiling to floor, cut off this portion of the room, making almost a separate apartment. The voices were quite unrestrained, and Barbara's attention was at last arrested by hearing little gusts of laughter; then—"If you had only arrived last night"—this in Mrs. Gregory's soft, buttery voice, "to witness the war-dance of our South Sea Islander, with her whoops, her war-paint, and

her feathers!" Then followed a clever, overdrawn description of Barbara's appearance in the dance pavilion.

Katharine MacFarland also heard every word, and, lifting her eyes, became for the first time conscious of Barbara's presence. She had risen, and was pale to the lips—all the careless happiness gone out of her face.

As she met Katharine's kind glance, the blood rushed back, crimsoning to the roots of her hair; the next instant she flew past the astonished gossips, who shrank back with little cries of dismay. Barbara ran as though pursued, on through the long corridors, at last out upon the sands, and still on, until at last, all breathless, she found herself among the arches where she had been in the morning.

Katharine had risen at the same instant and followed Barbara, but paused, and gave the gossips one more sensation, as she turned to them her young face, blazing with indignation, but speechless. She was close

enough upon Barbara's fleeter feet not to lose sight of her at first; and when she opened the pavilion door, in swift pursuit, she could still see Barbara's figure far up the sands. Katharine resolved to follow more deliberately, certain now of the direction.

There was no trace of the fugitive when Miss MacFarland, bonneted and gloved, carrying also an extra hat, returned to the beach, and set out in search. Finding Colonel Bent's little children digging in the sand, they told her that a young lady ran quickly past them up the parapet of the water-battery.

Once among its great arches, she was guided to Barbara by a little storm of sobs, and found the girl crouched in an embrasure, half hidden by a monstrous gun pointed through its opening. Katharine did not hesitate to come close to Barbara and take her hand. Barbara's face was all wet with indignant tears, and her eyes blazed wickedly, even through that mist. Katharine soft-

ly stroked the hand she held in silence, and at last said, "You must not mind this at all—it is not worth it."

"But I am very angry; and I do not like to be angry—I am not used to it! The whole thing is true, that is the worst. I can see it now—now that I have seen you, and your lovely, quiet ways—even your dark, simple dress shows me a part of it. And now that I see myself—really—everything that seemed quite right is all wrong."

Katharine still stroked her hand, soothed and coaxed her to believe that these were small matters, and easily acquired if necessary. Barbara, leaning back in an embrasure, regarded Katharine with a critical gaze, to which Katharine gave her back smiles and a tranquil, friendly glance.

"Why am I not like you, Miss MacFarland?"

"Because one would not have you so. I like you quite the better of the two. As for dress, that is nothing. You can be as I am or as you are, at your desire."

By the time footsteps came that way Barbara was once more tranquil, even smiling, and the passers-by saw only two indolent young girls resting in an embrasure, who presently rose and walked back along the sands. Katharine planned for them both an afternoon spent together.

"It is late already; we will not dress. You shall dine in my room with me; we will write some letters together, and then, together go down to the drawing-rooms this evening." After a moment's hesitation she continued, "You have a simple white dress? Well, we shall wear white to-night, and you will let me dress your hair."

Mrs. MacFarland was a little disturbed when her husband told her, that afternoon, not to expect Katharine to dine with them, but still more surprised, when, later, she entered their little sitting-room, holding Barbara by the hand.

"Mother, this is my friend Barbara Dexter, and she has promised to be with us to-

night." Barbara did not guess that the courteous greeting she received was entirely due to Mrs. MacFarland's dread of "What next?"

The only effort the mother made to expostulate with her daughter was, a few moments later, to call her into the adjoining room, and there, with her hand on Katharine's shoulder, urge this remonstrance: "If you mean to be an original, daughter, that is one thing—but let me implore you not to become eccentric." Katharine, usually more grave than merry, at this burst into such an irrepressible peal of laughter that, for some unexplainable reason, Mrs. MacFarland found herself completely reassured, and was, from that moment, doubly kind to Barbara. From the first, she had no trouble in making friends with Katharine's father.

V.

MRS. GREGORY was already holding court in the dance pavilion, little Jolly Black and Dennis Wainwright among the number around her chair.

Dennis Wainwright more than once looked uneasily around, half dreading Barbara's appearance, but tremendously bored without her. He turned a little aside, to give place to Dundas and Marcou.

The latter was unexpectedly doing what was desired of him, and, after saluting Mrs. Gregory, devoted himself exclusively to Helen Boniface.

Wainwright, feeling the touch of fingers on his arm, looked down from his six-feet-two, to find little Jolly Black hanging at his elbow.

"I want you to introduce me to the little South Sea Islander," whispered Jolly, when, having to look up, he caught the scowl of astonishment on Wainwright's face, and stopped short, with his mouth wide open.

"My friend Mrs. Gregory tells an excellent anecdote of the South Sea Islander, and I count on you—" but upon what he counted Wainwright never knew, for, after bestowing another scowl, he walked away. Jolly Black, rather perplexed, appealed to Dundas for an explanation of Wainwright's rude behavior, but Dundas, with mischievous malice, simply jerked his thumb over his shoulder towards Major Jones Brown-Jones, who was at that moment a little behind them, lounging against the wall.

Jolly Black's mettle was up by this time, and he was in no mood for trifling when he made a last appeal to the major. Brown-Jones cast at him a quizzical, indulgent glance, and drawled in reply,

"Would like to oblige you, Mr. Slack;

but this is not my office hour. I don't mind suggesting, though, that you will get yourself presented to Miss Barbara Dexter. She may help you, if neither Mrs. Gregory, Wainwright, nor Dundas can do so."

Black turned away with an angry little snort, and a shake of his fat shoulders. Mrs. Gregory, at that moment eying him, remarked to Dundas and Bradley that he looked not unlike a little bull-terrier pup that had just been scolded, and was ready to shake something between his teeth. She summoned him to her with one of her imperious gestures, and Jolly Black, already pretty well disciplined, sulkily moved to obey, when an unusual buzz of tongues caused him to turn from her towards the inner drawing-room doors. A little party of four was just entering, and afterwards made way through the throng in search of chairs. Jolly Black caught a glimpse of two young girls in white, with an elderly couple, before they were quite hidden from him in the po-

lite scrambling and eager crowding of beaux around these latest comers.

Wainwright was one of the first to see Katharine MacFarland enter, and just for a moment he hesitated, taking a sharp look at her companion, who was dressed in a simple white gown, shaped like a little child's frock, without intricate drapery, or, in fact, anything to break its flow from shoulder to hem, except a soft ribbon loosely knotted at the waist. Her hair was coiled on the crown of a shapely little head, only a few short, rebellious tendrils escaping at the nape of a graceful neck. To Wainwright's surprise, this charming vision looked at him with such friendly recognition that, thinking himself a lucky fellow, he made a few steps towards her; but it was only when his look of honest perplexity was answered by a little familiar peal of roguish laughter that he recognized Barbara.

If Barbara was a sensation the night before, this night she became the rage, and

queened it. Jolly Black, at last, had himself presented to Mrs. MacFarland and the two young ladies in her charge. From that moment he became the victim of Barbara's caprices, everything she did being a marvel in his eyes, and altogether perfect.

Mrs. Gregory, who was not unobservant of this dangerous young person, had made up her mind before the evening was over as to her own best policy.

She despatched one of her aides-de-camp with a gracious command that he should bring Miss Dexter to be presented. While not appearing to look in that direction, she had a most excellent tableau of Barbara when she received this message. There was the very faintest lifting of eyebrows, the lips parted with an amused smile, just enough to show a flash of white teeth ; a lazy motion of a fan, and the ambassador became permanently transferred to Barbara's court, presently walking off with her, indeed, to carry a message from Mrs. MacFarland to Katharine.

This hitherto-fastidious Boston woman found herself watching Barbara with an amused smile; really entertained and altogether softened towards that most unconventional of young ladies. Before Barbara obeyed Mrs. MacFarland's wish, she leaned towards her and said, in a low voice: "You have been very kind to me to-night. If I am your guest, I ought to tell you that I cannot accept any politeness from Mrs. Gregory."

While Mrs. MacFarland was still puzzling herself about this odd little speech, Mrs. Gregory herself, well supplied with her softest blandishments, crossed the pavilion to seat herself near her dear Mrs. MacFarland.

Katharine and Barbara shortly returning with their escorts, both young girls were presented to a silver-haired old lady, a friend of Mrs. MacFarland, who had arrived that evening.

While this old lady kept Katharine's at-

tention for a few moments, Mrs. Gregory asked Mrs. MacFarland to present her *protégée*. When Barbara had acknowledged the introduction, she found herself overwhelmed with Mrs. Gregory's flattery and prophecies of future triumph. That accomplished woman nearly stopped herself in the full tide of this effusiveness, at sight of Barbara's calm gaze, that neither received nor repelled. When, at last, Mrs. Gregory hoped Miss Dexter would be one of her especial young ladies at a water-party on Saturday, Barbara only replied by a little sweeping wave of her hand towards Mrs. MacFarland as she was led out to a new waltz.

Mrs. Gregory, who had never known even the appearance of defeat, charmingly assumed that Miss Dexter might be considered pledged to her for Saturday.

"She has referred me to you, Mrs. MacFarland, and you are too amiable to prevent her engagement."

Here was a chaperon in a strait—having witnessed the whole thing, she already marvelled to herself at this country lassie, and aloud expressed regret that she could not pledge Miss Dexter to an engagement for Saturday.

VI.

HELEN BONIFACE, when a little child, was brought up in the house of her grandfather; her own father and mother having died before she could remember them. She was the daughter of Peter's only son. Her mother's sister, Mrs. Gregory, came to visit Helen, a year before Peter died, and in a short time she had made herself so necessary to the old gentleman, that, when he fell into feeble health, all his affairs were conducted through her hands, and his former friends were quite shut away from his presence.

Six months before his death he made a will, of which Mrs. Gregory was—with her husband, John Gregory, and also Thomas Graves, a leading citizen of Wheeling—

executrix. By this will, the property of Peter Boniface was to remain untouched until the coming of age of his beloved granddaughter, Helen Boniface. A certain liberal sum was to be used yearly for her expenses; the remainder of income, after paying lawyers' fees, taxes on property, repairs, etc., was to be put in government bonds and remain also untouched, to accumulate until Helen should come of age; at which time, hoping his "esteemed friend, Amelia B. Gregory, would have so educated the said Helen that she would have become a discreet young woman," the whole of his property in lands, houses, and government bonds should become the property and be given into the possession of the said Helen Boniface.

By a codicil, the above bequest should be faithfully carried out, on one condition: the said Helen should forfeit the whole of said estate if she should marry the son of one Louis and Dorothy Marcou.

In case of such forfeiture, the whole of said estate to become the property, without condition, of his esteemed friend, Amelia B. Gregory. By a second codicil (showing, perhaps, that old Peter's wishes and affections underwent fluctuations) "the said Helen must not marry without the consent of Amelia B. Gregory, on pain of forfeiting the whole of aforementioned estate."

In case of such forfeiture, one third of said estate would go to the esteemed Amelia, the remaining two thirds to the erecting and endowment of a college for young women, on the ground where now stood the old Boniface homestead.

Although in possession of this important paper, Mrs. Gregory did not relax her care of Peter. She saw well to his comfort, sympathized with his fancies about his broad lands, and encouraged his hates.

Her whole time was so devoted to him that all his wants were anticipated, and he needed her every hour. For good reasons,

well known to both of them, Amelia Gregory stood in wholesome dread of just one human being — her husband, John Gregory. One day she received an imperative summons to meet him in Cincinnati. It was a great risk, to leave old Peter for twenty-four hours, but neither could John Gregory be disobeyed. This faithful wife set out with many misgivings, leaving Peter sitting on his broad veranda, sulky and lonely.

A pleasant diversion soon arrived to him, however, for the train that carried Amelia away had hardly whisked out of sight when a dashing pair of grays drove into the grounds, and John Gregory, lawyer, surprised old Peter with an early morning visit.

The power to charm Peter Boniface seemed to run in the Gregory family, for the lawyer spent a long morning closeted with him; lunched with him in his study, and, when he left in the late afternoon, he

hummed a brisk tune to himself, and a satisfied smile curled his lips as he drove to the depot.

Strangely enough, Amelia could not find her John when she reached Cincinnati, and, still more strangely, when she returned Peter made no mention of having seen him.

When her grandfather died, little Helen was carried to San Francisco. Her school-days were rather lonely, and she saw little of her aunt; if she did not see her at breakfast, perhaps they would not meet for days at a time, the great Mrs. Gregory being engrossed with a thousand social duties. However, the niece was provided with the best masters, had her share of companions, and loved her Uncle Gregory, as she called him. Having been sent, for three years, to a fashionable finishing-school, she had made her *début* in Washington this very winter, and the little heiress, after being carried to the receptions of January and permitted three or four of the best Germans, had been

picked up in the midst of a flirtation with a very objectionable Mr. Dundas, whom they met every night for a week, at all the best houses, and who had made himself very disagreeably attentive.

Mrs. Gregory never liked a risk, if she could avoid it, and carried Helen right out of Washington, having two excellent reasons for doing so: to win Marcou was to win a fortune for herself—that was natural; to separate Helen from objectionable young Dundas was to protect her niece from one of the idle young good-for-naughts hanging around Washington—that was praiseworthy.

She found Marcou and made him known to his cousin Helen—so far so well; but Mrs. Gregory received a disagreeable sensation when, at breakfast on the third morning after arriving at the hotel, a young man in uniform lazily strolled in also to his breakfast. He stopped at Mrs. Gregory's table and smilingly welcomed her, suggest-

ing that he had not dared hope he should meet her so soon again.

The never-embarrassed Mrs. Gregory nearly stammered and nearly blushed, while Dundas drawled, "Ah, just my luck! You have forgotten already one of your most devoted admirers."

"No, Mr. Dundas, I am only honestly surprised, since I had just left you in Washington, a civilian, and a beau of all the Germans; and now I find you—"

"Ah, just my luck again! Now that you find I was only a poor devil of a lieutenant, off on leave, of course I cannot expect you to notice me. But," turning to Helen, whom he had already saluted, "I hope Miss Boniface is not equally cruel?"

Mrs. Gregory felt herself to be so nearly outgeneralled that she hastened to show him the most tender regard, made him be seated beside her, and tell her the latest news of their mutual friends in Washington. She was so completely devoted during the whole

of the breakfast that Dundas might have been ten times as inventive a man and yet not have been able to say ten words to the niece, whom she presently carried away, leaving him with his just-arrived breakfast.

Mrs. Gregory did not have to spend the morning in debate with herself as to her wisest course. Her decisions were always the most masterly when the most rapid; and she at once concluded not to run away from Dundas a second time, but to stay and defeat him, trusting much in herself, hoping much from Marcou. That night, as she stood *en déshabille*, in an easy, off-guard attitude, before her mirror, both hands on her hips, she smiled and nodded at her reflection.

"A pretty good general yet, Amelia. What could you fear from a Dundas or a Marcou?" and here she snapped her fingers.

In the following days Dundas found it difficult to get more than daily salutations from Miss Boniface; not that he was less

assiduous, or that she avoided him, but she was always engaged for dances and promenades, or, between whiles, seated beside her devoted aunt, who saved her much trouble in conversation.

For Helen everything was made easy, being one of a party of merry young girls, and having no end of pleasure every day. "One did not have to think at all. Aunt Amelia saved all that trouble." As for Cousin Louis Marcou, in the first days, while he was a most kind cousin, always ready and glad to serve her, he had seemed the very devoted attendant of Miss MacFarland, but lately all that was changed.

Miss MacFarland and Miss Dexter were the reigning belles of the day, and Louis Marcou had become a very gem of a cousin. He and Helen Boniface were inseparable. He was always to be had for any service in the late afternoon and evening; danced with her as many dances as she could spare him; walked with her on the sands or on

the parapet of the fort; played with her at lawn-tennis; was always her escort home from dress-parade, and already Mrs. Gregory laid glorious plans for the future. She had not yet dared suggest to Marcou that his very pointed and public attentions to her niece had engaged the affections of that young lady, and that the whole thing was considered settled by an observant public; neither had she yet made Helen understand that, as a matter of course, Marcou expected her to marry him, since she had encouraged his attentions, too marked not to be those of a favored lover. Amelia waited for the favorable occasion.

VII.

BARBARA'S days also were passed quite to her satisfaction.

No one disputed the early morning hours spent with Katharine MacFarland, when Barbara held the palette while Katharine was busy with her brush. Never did artist have more ardent worship than Barbara gave Katharine; she was content to kneel close to the canvas for hours in silence. Katharine, the little devotee to art, sometimes laughingly cried out that Barbara showed no mercy, but would have her enslaved at work.

Secretly she was pleased with this odd companionship, and in her quiet way encouraged it. If by chance she was the first to throw aside the lattice, she would be dis-

appointed not to find Barbara already waiting for her. When warned by the sun that they must make ready for Mrs. MacFarland, materials were put away with girlish hurry and emulation, Barbara bearing off the canvas, holding it critically at arm's-length, and unconsciously making a very pretty picture of herself. The two young girls, at first so ill assorted, were now constant companions; their walks, drives, pleasures of all kinds, were much in each other's society. Neither of them was inclined to quiet flirtation, neither often giving to any one devoted admirer so much as a solitary stroll; they ruled as young queens, each in her own way, but chose never to be far apart. It had become quite a matter of course that Barbara was always under Mrs. MacFarland's care, and, oddly enough, she became delighted with the girl and all her vagaries: she was only second to Jolly Black in championing Barbara's interests. That little man was her devoted slave from the first moment

when, after being presented, he had the hardihood to follow Brown-Jones's advice, and at once asked Miss Dexter to assist him in getting a sight of the South Sea Islander. Barbara made him a sweeping courtesy.

"I am the South Sea Islander, at your service, man of the sea." Jolly Black was never permitted to forget his little South Sea Islander, but he took his punishment like a man. He made no secret of his devotion to Barbara; indeed, Dundas insisted that she led him about at the end of a silken cord. His rosy face beamed applause at Barbara's most cruel jests, even when himself the victim. She decorated the young men with his flowers, and fed them with his confections. Consenting to a drive in his wagonette, with a party of six, and, after gravely inviting fat Miss Parkman in his name to be the seventh, insisting that this solid young lady should be lifted to the driving-seat beside Jolly Black, who held the ribbons, she suddenly had a headache

herself, and put Dennis Wainwright into unforeseen bliss by languidly taking his arm back into the hotel, not waiting to hear remonstrance.

No punishment overtook Barbara; Jolly Black only redoubled his devotion, and she made him acknowledge that the thing he most needed for his good was discipline.

Once only she tried him sorely.

Mrs. Gregory frequently encountered Barbara, of course, and she detected a wicked gleam in the girl's eyes at every meeting. For the first time in her life this great woman beheld her court dwindle. Instead of being the centre of all things, her followers were slipping through her fingers, and flocking around an impertinent young woman.

She first began to realize this when, beckoning to Jolly Black with a little peremptory motion of her fan that had never failed her in the past, she saw him look absently across and through her, and deliberately drift away to this young rival. She promised

herself some punishment for Barbara on the following day, the day of her great water-party.

Friday evening Barbara took the arm of Jolly Black and walked with him away from the dance pavilion into an alcove of the drawing-room beyond, where she motioned him to a seat beside her. Poor Black thought he had arrived at the moment of supreme bliss when Barbara, smiling at him, said,

“Jolly, you have something to do for me, something very especial.” Black promised at once and unconditionally.

“You must send away to-night your *chef*, your engineer, half of your sailors, and all of your small boats. The engineer must disable the engine before he takes his leave of absence, and so—you see—there can be no water-party to-morrow.”

Poor Black's chin gradually dropped as Barbara came to the end of her instructions. He even pleaded for mercy. Was he not

pledged to Mrs. Gregory—could she not give him some other hard duty—anything—anything in the world but this?

Barbara only laughed as she rose. "Take me back to Mrs. MacFarland. It is a lovely moonlight night, and you want to see that your men run away comfortably."

At breakfast the next morning Barbara had the wicked pleasure of seeing Mrs. Gregory open her mail. It was always a noticeable mail, and always brought to her on a salver by her own maid at this hour. Among many square envelopes Barbara, from her neighboring table, at once recognized Black's familiar crest. Mrs. Gregory opened this first, with a smile of pleasurable anticipation, which at once faded into an ugly frown. Then, with a hurried, uneasy glance around, she encountered Barbara's eyes raised serenely from her coffee-cup, and Mrs. Gregory was not quite certain that Barbara deserved to be poisoned.

After breakfast the expectant guests were

sweetly informed of the day's misfortune by Mrs. Gregory, and she really gained some new adherents by her graceful fortitude. She called upon them all to sympathize with poor Mr. Black, who was so overwhelmed with grief at disappointing her that he had gone to bed—ill.

So much sympathy was there for poor Jolly Black, that Katharine and Barbara persuaded Mrs. MacFarland to give him a dear little supper that night, in a choice little supper-room that could only seat a nice little party of ten. There was nothing really vindictive about Barbara, and she had no idea of punishing Helen Boniface for the shortcomings of her aunt. Indeed, Helen was, next to Katharine, her especial favorite, and, as often as possible, included among the young girls she gathered about her. Learning that Mrs. Gregory had retired with a sick-headache, it was easy for her to arrange that Helen and Marcou should be among the chosen ten for the supper.

Little Black was seated at table with Barbara on one side of him and Helen Boniface on the other. Barbara diligently fed to him, with her own hands, terrapin, salads, meringues, and, between mouthfuls, made Helen hold to his lips occasional sips of Madeira. And so the little man, by way of being consoled, was almost killed with kindness. Barbara proposed, as final toast, "Those poor sailors," and hoped they had not lost their way.

Marcou had come to this little supper against his will, but had been invited by Barbara, in the presence of Helen Boniface, to be Helen's escort, and invited in such a manner that he could not decline.

He had not before come quite face to face with Katharine MacFarland since the morning she had so befooled him. He now felt the angry blood mount to his brow as he found himself, in spite of himself, sitting opposite to her. Since he had refused her the opportunity to make amends, Katharine, with a

woman's inconsistency, considered they were quits, and calmly accepted his disapproval. She sat between Wainwright and Edgerton, with Brown-Jones just beyond, and Marcou fancied a particular meaning in every word Edgerton addressed to her. When she gave attention to the latter her eyes were turned from Marcou, and he stole frequent opportunities for observing her. In spite of himself his anger softened, as he regarded her pale, sensitive face, and he was in the act of calling himself harsh names, when Katharine, turning to reply to Wainwright, met his gaze. The soft color that rose to her face, he rightly judged, was a flush of displeasure, and after that she neither sought nor avoided his glance.

One of Barbara's pastimes was boating. Her previous life had cultivated in her such a love of active sports, her body needed its daily excitement of motion, fresh air, sunlight, as much as the young women, trained to an indolent, in-door existence, needed their

languid pleasures of novel-reading, daytime siestas, bonbons, and flattery. She had already learned to pull an oar on the small lake near Harfield; and when Jolly Black one day placed at her disposal a dainty little craft, that had been made expressly for her use and named the "Barbara," her childish delight was reward enough for him. She never wearied of this toy, and every day wreathed the little man's face with smiles when she arranged with him the morning sport.

"Whom shall we indulge to-day, Jolly? whom do you want? You shall have the prettiest girl, or the wittiest, you can name; but I must pull you."

A favorite amusement was a stroll to the little pier every morning after breakfast, to watch the embarking of Barbara and her guests. Even, by and by, a little emulation crept in; yachting-suits became the ordinary costumes at breakfast, and soon, almost a little fleet of shells pushed off together at ten every fair morning. Barbara's favorite

rival with the oars was Wainwright, whose deep chest and brawny arms had given him athletic honors at college. A race between these contestants was almost a daily habit now, and Barbara was indulged in fictitious triumphs, when the young giant who, by exerting only half his real strength, would have shot past her, using a brave show of exertion, yet allowed himself to be distanced every time, and received her joyful shout of derision with becoming humility. This hour was probably the only happy one in Wainwright's day.

Dennis Wainwright was, by no means, the mere idle man he seemed, but a promising young civil-engineer. He had worked for some years under guidance of Louis Marcou the elder, and had a fair prospect of becoming junior partner. After a season of particularly hard work, Mr. Marcou had sent him out of Washington to Louis, as he was threatened with one of the low fevers prevailing at that time.

An old schoolmate of Louis before the latter went to West Point, and ever since a close friend, he was also a favorite among the young officers. Dennis, who had always been noted for his sunny disposition and gay *camaraderie*, now became a changed young man. To the least observing was evident his mad jealousy of every man who approached Barbara; and as that young person was surrounded at once, when she showed her gay countenance, at dress-parade, at the assemblies, on the promenade, Dennis was in a state of perpetual gloom. He hung on the outskirts of the little group that followed her. His jealous madness was so unreasonable that even little Jolly Black was honored by his grand airs; and he nearly quarrelled with Marcou, who, feeling they were intimate enough for friendly remonstrance, begged him to cease following the girl. At which he blazed out fiercely, saying, he would have her scoffs, her gibes, and her ridicule, rather than the serious regard of any other woman.

That careless young person still allowed him his share of dances, but pronounced him too solemn and cross for a quiet, lonely promenade, and she must be protected by Dundas, Jolly Black, even several others, when it came to a walk up the beach with Mr. Wainwright.

Even Katharine, pitying the real unhappiness of the poor lad, remonstrated with Barbara, who only laughed softly as she tossed her pretty head with the old familiar gesture. If quiet and conventional garments could have toned Barbara's high spirits to a becoming equipoise, she would have been a sedate copy of the most approved young women of good form, her daily associates. Her boxes had arrived from Katharine's modiste with but little delay, and Barbara dropped Katharine a demure courtesy when she made a first appearance severely simple, and perfectly *comme-il-faut*.

"Now, Barbara, you have arrived at the height of your ambition," said Katharine,

smiling indulgently. "Even the Philadelphia chaperons will acknowledge that you are as severely dressed as you should be for the promenade. It is evident you would scorn to wear a becoming knot of ribbon, or, in fact, anything becoming."

Barbara was so fitful in her moods that one hour gave no clew to her conduct in the next. Even Katharine's patience was sometimes tried, although her devotion to Barbara was recognized by the most unobservant. That Barbara should be the torment of her admirers; that they should submit to her thousand whims, leading to unforeseen and uncomfortable adventure, were matters of course. All things were possible to her, because she was Barbara. She, who influenced all that indulged in her society, was herself influenced by only one. Towards Marcou she often showed a quiet, almost a restraint, that amounted to timidity. As grave and sedate as he had of late become, Barbara was sometimes even more so in his

presence. She, perhaps, even before he was aware of it himself, had divined that some more than ordinary feeling influenced him, either towards or against Miss MacFarland, and that his regard for Helen Boniface was mere kindly-cousinly. To Barbara herself he was indulgent without criticism, as to a rather spoiled child, which Barbara remembering, in the quiet of her own room, would resent with an impatient patting of her foot, and sighs equally impatient.

As the spring days grew long and warm, Barbara and Katharine, more and more frequently, wandered off together with the sketching-tools for some favorite haunt.

VIII.

AFTER the little supper, Helen Boniface found her cousin Louis more than usually absent-minded. They were, perhaps, oftener together; indeed, he strolled to her side quite as a matter of course, whenever she made her appearance, and Helen began to think of him as "Poor, dear, lonely Louis." She took more trouble for him than any one else, and would not have hesitated to break any engagement to another at his wish. She began to feel necessary to him, and, being a dutiful little woman, continually reminded herself of him, even when apart. Helen was so obviously drifting to the very course Mrs. Gregory desired, that she began to be allowed unusual freedom, and was even sometimes permitted to be quite out of sight.

On a sunny afternoon, as April began to more and more invite to idle basking in the sun, Helen and Marcou, walking together up the sands, found themselves in close neighborhood of Miss MacFarland and Barbara Dexter, who were seated on a point of rocks. Katharine, busily laying on a small canvas a sketch of beach and distant fringe of trees, had not discovered their approach; but idle Barbara, holding the palette, signalled to Helen, who, not noticing Marcou's hesitancy, approached them.

Helen had lately been so welcomed and encouraged by Barbara, and even Katharine, also, that a certain intimacy, or, at least, familiar friendliness had grown between them, and was encouraged by Mrs. Gregory. Katharine's glance of welcome did not necessarily exclude Marcou, and Barbara rallied him upon his attitude of interrogation and hesitancy, as he stood a little distant, cap in hand. To obey Barbara's wilfulness was an easy matter, of course, and Marcou soon

found himself arranging rugs for three, instead of one young lady. Quite naturally the palette came to his care; and when the little group was shortly joined by Dundas and Wainwright, who had seen it from the parapet of the fort, Marcou even discovered that the palette, the rugs, and Miss MacFarland were all in his charge, while four young people slowly strolled away and up the sands towards the distant fringe of trees.

Marcou, for the first time alone with Katharine MacFarland since her unaccountable treatment of him, coldly apologized for his unavoidable intrusion.

"Do not feel disturbed, you are in no way responsible for this latest freak of Miss Dexter;" and Katharine calmly extended her hand for the palette, which Marcou, of course, felt obliged to return.

Katharine continued to paint, not unsteadily, but bringing out with telling strokes the at first immature sketch, which now visibly grew under her hand.

A little red spot burned on the cheek turned towards Marcou. He noticed that, and the proud curling of her lip. As for Louis, his heart began to beat more and more impatiently; he felt an unreasonable anger towards this young girl, and was yet furious with himself for being angry. The sound of footsteps made him turn to see three approaching figures—Mrs. Gregory, Edgerton, now, as always, faultlessly attired, and, in their wake, Edgerton's body-servant, who carried a handsome bunch of pale-pink hyacinths. These Edgerton took from the man, and presented to Katharine with several graceful, nameless mannerisms, and hoped Miss MacFarland would walk with him on the parapet—it was such a perfect day for clear reflections in the moat. Katharine did not refuse, but while adjusting the fragrant flowers to her dress, glanced at the sketching materials; and Edgerton hastened to assure her that his man would see that the rugs and other possessions were safely returned

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to Mrs. MacFarland's apartment. Katharine assented, and after saluting Marcou and Mrs. Gregory with a gentle inclination, walked away with Edgerton.

Marcou had the pleasure of being left alone with Mrs. Gregory, who, a little out of breath, but looking her most winning appeal, assured him that she had taken this trouble to have a few moments' talk uninterrupted.

The young people who started off together were a gay little party of four, as far up the beach as Marcou could see them.

By and by Dundas made a shell, and a bunch of sea-weed, sufficient pretext to detain Helen Boniface an instant. As she bent her head to see, and held out her hand to receive the shell, she found her hand closely, almost roughly, grasped, and, looking up, startled into a brief alarm, found Dundas gazing at her with reproach that abashed her; and, for no reason at all, she looked guilty and afraid, but only for an instant.

"You must release my hand, Mr. Dundas," making a gentle motion of withdrawal; "why do you look at me strangely and angrily?"

"I remember that, not so long ago, you were kind and friendly, and made me believe I not only might become, but already was, something to you."

No answer from Helen, only, again, the timid, upward glance; and he continued,

"Helen, you cannot wish me to believe you are still the child you were when we first knew each other; when little Helen Boniface gave me her satchel to carry every day from school; when little Helen Boniface rode behind me on my pony; used me as she would for brother and comrade in all those years; kissed me good-bye, and was unhappy to lose her big Hal when he went to West Point."

A blaze of color on Helen's cheek, and a heavy tear on Helen's lashes.

"We were children, Hal."

Neither Barbara Dexter nor Mrs. Gregory could have recognized in this vehement, impulsive man the usual cool, nonchalant Dundas they knew. He continued persistently,

“And now, the other day, I find you in Washington, not any longer my little Helen, but the woman I love. How is it here? I can never see you, never speak with you alone. It is always that you are engaged, or sitting close to that detestable woman.” This last, in a low voice, to himself. “Helen, look at me—honestly, in my eyes—are you promised to Marcou to be his wife? There—I am a brute, a rough, unmannerly—I knew it was not so! Helen, you are to me the one woman in the world, and I have always belonged to you.”

Barbara Dexter, returning later, found the two apparently waiting for her, where they had first lingered. To her saucy reproaches, Dundas retorted with his usual weapons of complaint.

“That is just like you, to desert a fellow—run away from him—and then abuse him for it afterwards. Make amends, and take me home with you, if only to prove that you are entirely impartial.”

As these young people, once more four, approached the point of rocks where they had left Katharine and Marcou, Mrs. Gregory, sitting there, comfortably shaded by a parasol Marcou held, saw Barbara Dexter and Dundas, arm in arm, engaged in one of their merry altercations; while a silent pair walked beside them—Wainwright sulkily switching his cane, Helen lifting serene gray eyes to Marcou's face, when their glances met.

As usual, and in spite of herself, Mrs. Gregory admired the generalship of this wily North Carolina girl. “She must have some one to protect her from Wainwright's jealous rages, and to-day, no one more available than my little simpleton Helen, with Dundas to balance the number.”

Barbara, at once missing Katharine, turned to Marcou with her little matter-of-course air; he was, however, so busy with Helen's wraps that he could not have heard her, and Mrs. Gregory sweetly volunteered.

"Miss MacFarland has gone for her usual promenade with that devoted Mr. Edgerton. It is an old affair, you know, and has the sanction of the young lady's parents as well as herself."

Barbara here favored Mrs. Gregory with a prolonged stare, and hurried on with Dundas, first casting a mischievous glance at Wainwright, who was left to carry the shawls and direct the steps of the great woman.

Marcou had at last been assured, by Mrs. Gregory, that only her perfect confidence in his integrity, as also his devotion to Helen, had made her permit the intimacy that had grown up between them, especially since, of late, she had discovered Helen's very deep feeling for him. Marcou received this in silence; indeed, since Katharine had walked

away on Edgerton's arm, he had hardly spoken. Helen did not notice his silence. If she had been thinking about him at all, she would have put it down to "Cousin Louis's way." With a woman's half-instinctive judgment, suspecting that Marcou was not a happy man, she always humored him. Her own silence, when he was silent, caressingly soothed him; and, in the past, he had been as unconscious and unrestrained in her presence as to a sister.

Helen sat near him in the little boat-house, and when Mrs. Gregory passed up from the beach on Wainwright's arm, she was well pleased to see them there. This girl, too conscious of the hour before to be yet roused from the memory of it, sat looking out on the water, a happy half-smile dimpling the corners of her mouth. She was shaken from her reverie, and entirely out of herself, as her eyes wandered towards Marcou, and found he had been quietly regarding her, not in his usual kindly way. Marcou saw the hap-

piness of her face change to a vague, disquieted, questioning look, and he first broke the silence between them.

"Helen, will you be my wife?"

"Cousin Louis! how unkind!" with a little cry of dismay; "I thought we were such friends"—heart-brokenly. Here Helen burst into tears of genuine distress, while Louis, full of consternation, tried to soothe her, his broken, incoherent sentences revealing more than he intended. Helen stopped in the midst of a great sob, to turn on him an excited, girlishly indignant face, and blushed enchantingly as she gathered from his naïve disclosures that her aunt, Mrs. Gregory, was responsible for this rather abrupt and stern offer of marriage. To Louis's great relief, Helen broke into a peal of laughter so immoderately contagious that Marcou joined her; and presently Dundas, who had come in search, found them seated close together, talking earnestly in low tones. A little frown appeared between his brows, and he

was moving abruptly away, when Helen held out a half-timid, detaining hand, and turned to him a charming, telltale face that brought him quickly to her side. Marcou, who could not misunderstand their eloquent faces, as Dundas drew Helen's hand within his arm, looked smiling inquiry.

"I hope Helen's cousin will be the first to congratulate me and wish us happiness," said Dundas, frankly, offering his hand.

IX.

MRS. GREGORY was a little puzzled that evening. Marcou had, indeed, less than usual to say to any one except Helen; for, when not in her neighborhood, he stood rather apart, grave and taciturn. When with Helen, they seemed perfectly satisfied with each other; Mrs. Gregory thought she even detected a little interchange of glance^{ive} that betrayed a secret understanding between them; but, in spite of this, they were seldom together. Dundas made his appearance early in the evening, and, after saluting Mrs. Gregory with his usual mock homage, she observed that he turned towards Helen and Marcou; the latter, in a few moments, resigned his place, and Dundas became, by some fatality Mrs. Gregory could not con-

trol, Helen's cavalier for the evening. He danced with her, and, to the chaperon's annoyance, walked away with her among the promenading couples.

They returned just before the next waltz, however, and Mrs. Gregory had the vexation of seeing Helen repeatedly decline to dance it, and also the following one. As this was past endurance, the delinquent was summoned, and asked, with the solicitude of a mother, whether she were ill. On receiving a calm denial, Helen was rather sharply enjoined not to make herself conspicuous by sitting still the whole evening, when Dundas elaborately thanked Mrs. Gregory for so befriending him.

"You see, Miss Boniface, I have your aunt's authority that you will dance with me. There is our waltz." He whirled her away, smiling a grateful acknowledgment to the angry chaperon, who lost sight of them both for a long interval. She cast several uneasy glances at Marcou, and fancied that

he was, more than before, grave and preoccupied. If she had not been so full of her own vexation, and, while manœuvring her five other young ladies and their partners, anxiously searching the distance for a glimpse of Helen, she might have discovered that Marcou was neither absent-minded nor quiescent.

He was inwardly raging with himself for being there at all—for on-looking—for submitting to watch and chafe at Katharine MacFarland. He despised himself for caring, when he beheld her, eagerly sought and claimed; and it was no redress to his sense of wrong and injustice, to repeatedly urge on his own consciousness the petty, trifling inferiority of these idlers that flocked around her. His lip curled with a fine scorn of himself, as he found his heart beating with a quicker motion to observe how Katharine received the low-spoken asides of Edgerton, who, having waltzed with her a moment before, was now evidently urging some especial

plea. Katharine, toying with her fan, raised her eyes (in the little absent way Marcou so well remembered, and scourged himself for loving), met his gaze, and calmly turned to place her hand on Edgerton's arm, and walk away with him.

Marcou was then, for the first time, aware that Barbara stood near, and was closely observing him, with a look of solicitude on her own face that chafed his already impatient mood beyond endurance, and he left the pavilion at once by the nearest door of exit. After walking some time alone, on the promenade, he threw himself impatiently on one of the lounges in the boat-house.

The place was in a half gloom, lighted by distant lamps skirting the promenade, and Marcou liked its solitude. A moment later, he saw a couple approach along the narrow planking, and as they were between him and the distant lights, they looked darker than the night itself; he could, however, judge by the outlines of their forms that it was no ro-

mantic pair. They brushed past him, and stood leaning against the balcony that overhung the lapping water. Standing so, they were both dimly defined, and Marcou, to his surprise, recognized Mrs. Gregory, who was usually too engaged with her duties as chaperon to be a moment absent from her charges, and he had never known her to have a fancy for quiet flirtation, in out-of-the-way corners, all triumphs being in full sight of an admiring audience. Her companion, an unusually large, fine-looking man of about her own age, spoke in the low, deep tones of a voice well under control, and admirably in keeping with his broad chest. The eyes were deeply set, and a furrow between them might indicate a bad temper or an habitual thoughtfulness. A heavy mustache and beard hid completely the mouth that was giving utterance to a rather stern rebuke.

“ I understand perfectly your present tactics, and warn you now, that the devil will not always be on your side.”

"What do you wish me to do, John?"

"Make no use whatever of the paper in your possession, for fear of me. Helen is to be quite free, and Marcou is entirely safe from your chicanery; only leave Helen alone. I do not make any threats; I will simply show you, before I leave on the early morning train, a paper that will be convincing."

Marcou had, by this time, overthrown a chair to make his presence known, much vexed to have already heard so much; and the two returned as they came.

Late that night, Dundas, rapping at his casemate, asked to come in and smoke with him. When they had puffed awhile in silence, "Am I right," said Dundas, "in believing you have no personal objection to my marriage with Helen Boniface?"

After a little pause Marcou replied,

"I might answer you in two ways, and there is no reason why I should not be perfectly frank. If you mean whether I have any

unusual regard for Helen herself, aside from the fact that she is the only one of my mother's kindred that I know, and, therefore, has a claim on me, I am fond of Helen as if she were really my sister. I am glad she cares for you, Dundas. Without any romantic talk about classmates and all that, I know you thoroughly, and I do not know a better man. If you love her, you will make her happy; and the poor little thing must have had a lonely existence so far. There is just one thing I cannot understand—you are strangers to each other. *I* am the one who, even in this brief period, has been her constant companion; and how you and Helen have discovered each other in a morning walk—"

"But," Dundas interrupted, "I came here, to-night, to tell you everything. You have a right to know, standing, as you should, in the place of a brother to her.

"Helen and I were children together. John Gregory has only one intimate friend,

and that is my father. Of course, he never cared for his wife; they lived a life quite apart, though under the same roof. She was what you see, only more so; for in San Francisco she is a woman of vast influence. Society seems to hang together on her 'yea' and 'nay,' and no one knows why. Such a woman, of course, has no time to give to her own family, unless for some selfish reason; and John Gregory is, at any rate, too much of a man to need her in his life. He frequented our house, and, I suppose, until little Helen came, that was about his only relaxation. My mother, who was an unusual woman, encouraged the intimacy, and it became a matter of course that Mr. Gregory was at home in our house. His plate was always set at table, on the chance of his coming, and it was a common thing for my father, on return from court, to find him poring over law-books at our library wood-fire. I remember little Helen's first appearance. I was curled up in a window-seat in the li-

brary, reading Baron Munchausen, and had not noticed the opening of the door; indeed, it was one of my ways to be engrossed in a book at once. Presently I heard John Gregory's deep voice talking to my father; but that was so common an occurrence that, with a boy's disregard of formality, I still bent over my book, unable to tear myself away from the thrilling old baron, even to turn my eyes aside and give greeting. Presently I became conscious of some living presence close beside me, and turned, unwillingly, to meet the quiet gaze of a solemn pair of gray eyes. A little girl stood on tip-toe beside me; her absurdly small fingertips rested on the sill and assisted her to a better height, as she looked over my arm at Baron Munchausen's horse tied to the church steeple. Meeting my eyes, quite unabashed, she said, 'When you are through, I am Helen Boniface.' That was the beginning of many visits. I became devoted to Helen, and my mother was more a moth-

er to her than Mrs. Gregory. Strange as it may seem, I suppose this aunt of Helen's was not even conscious of my existence, although, in a dim way, aware of her husband's intimacy with Judge Dundas.

"Once a year, perhaps, Mrs. Gregory and Mrs. Dundas exchanged cards. As for Helen, beyond knowing she had the best teachers and good dressmaker, Mrs. Gregory's care did not go. She never disputed her husband's fancy to make a companion of the child; and it was doubtless a relief when Mrs. Dundas made Helen visit her for weeks at a time. I was twelve and Helen seven, when we first began to know her; and the little sprite possessed us all before the year was out. My mother used to say Helen's spirituelle face, Helen's dainty, supple, nervous hands, that gesticulated and illustrated her enthusiastic speech, and Helen's altogether winsomeness, were irresistibly fascinating. There is not much more to tell. At eighteen, you know, I went to West

Point. Helen continued to be the companion of my mother and her Uncle Gregory for two years more, when she was sent to school in New York. I met her again, the other day, in Washington, only to learn that I had always loved her. Mrs. Gregory, without really knowing, put me down for a too-attentive idler, and therefore, perhaps, a dangerous one, and took Helen at once away, not thinking she would find me here."

Dundas rose to go, the two young men grasping hands in a long, close grasp.

X.

As most of Barbara's waking hours were devoted to tormenting poor Dennis Wainwright, it is fair to suppose she sometimes needed a little relaxation herself. Perhaps that was why, the morning after Dundas' confession to Marcou, she took herself early, very early, to a tiny pavilion that hung over the water, where the swimmers bathe in summer. Sitting under the roof of this open pavilion, she was very near the unglassed end of the hotel, and, of course, visible to any one on its lower verandas, but quite out of sight of the dwellers on stories above. It can hardly be said Barbara felt any sentimental inclinations, but she thoroughly enjoyed the hour. A more exquisite morning could not be imagined. The

sun was coming out of the water to the left of her, and a stiff little breeze blowing from the land. This breeze came in puffs and swirls, and, on that very account, has something to do with my story.

Barbara, comfortably curled up in a wicker chair, was not too deeply engrossed in her novel to enjoy the sights and sounds of early morning. At first, there were no unusual sounds beyond the long wash of water on the sands beneath this house on stilts. After a while, the opening of a blind on an upper veranda made Barbara pleasantly aware that she was not the only living creature awake; besides, soon there were voices which the wind carried to her, and one of these voices she recognized, unmistakably, as Mrs. Gregory's; the other, a deep bass, unknown to her. These voices either rose and fell in some excitement, or else the wind, bringing their sounds, as it did, in puffs, created that impression. Barbara heard, at last, with certainty, these words, spoken distinctly and angrily enough:

"I mean, this time, to have my own way, John Gregory. The paper is mine, and there is no denying it is legally drawn."

"I will prove"—this from the bass—"that the paper is so much trash."

Here followed a confused sound, half drowned, half carried by the little puffs of wind; and then, on the veranda above, a hurried scrambling of feet and exclamations of dismay. Barbara was too human not to feel a little interested, and, although still curled in the chair, her eyes roamed towards the verandas, and saw a white paper whirling, in idiotic curves, from somewhere above. In an instant it had lodged on the second veranda, and the footsteps, once more hurried, finally died away. A very madness now seemed to possess the wind, and once more it whirled the piece of paper, lifted it from the veranda, puffed it out over the water, and sent it coying, whirling, swooping, until it fell so close to Barbara that a lazy bending of her body put it into her possession.

If it has been gathered, in this little history, that Barbara was an exemplary young lady, I fear she will now entirely lose that reputation. The sealed paper between her fingers felt thick and looked ugly, like some of her uncle's business documents. Written in a formal hand outside were these words: "Last will and testament of Peter Boniface." This was interesting. Barbara thrust it between the leaves of her book just as a rush of feet, on the second veranda, made her look up again, and she saw Mrs. Gregory, rather dishevelled, running up and down in a fruitless search, peering over railings, and looking uncommonly disturbed. This only whetted Barbara's interest, and her wicked resolve was not altered when she became convinced that the tall man with Mrs. Gregory was equally anxious and disturbed.

Barbara, with a perfectly calm demeanor, and a flinty heart, simply rose from her chair and walked into the hotel, speedily returning to her room by the elevator. From that

well-glassed end of the hotel there was an admirable view of the place she had left, the beach under it, and also of verandas, recently the scene of a little dramatic interest. She observed that, although Mrs. Gregory had disappeared, the tall man walked up and down those sands, carefully searching every cranny, and with him a small army of hotel servants, who carried search even to the point of examining minutely a pile of *débris* beyond the hotel. The mischief-maker, knowing their search was quite vain, shook her head with a little sigh, and entered her room.

It must not be believed that Barbara was utterly depraved, and careless of the rights of property; but she sometimes acted from impulse, and on this occasion had taken it into her capricious head that Mrs. Gregory needed some more discipline. Then, too, she had gathered just enough of the dispute between husband and wife to feel that something was wrong about the paper itself; and not having a very exalted opinion of Mrs.

Gregory, she was ready to believe, if there was a good, easy wrong to be done, Mrs. Gregory was capable of doing it. She had heard enough to convince her that the paper belonged to a scheming woman at the time the wind whisked it away; and, besides, the name, "Peter Boniface," suggested *not* Mrs. Gregory, but Helen Boniface, her niece. So, with another shake of her wilful head, wicked Barbara decided to "wait and see." Placing the sealed package among laces and ribbons in her trunk, she went to breakfast with an easy conscience, or, perhaps, with no conscience at all.

Meantime, John Gregory was not to be envied. Having lost a will put into his keeping eleven years before, with a letter of trust enjoining it upon him to bring forward and prove the will when Helen should have reached her eighteenth birthday, how was he to account for his stewardship?

He had armed himself with the paper,

now in Barbara's possession, intending that the mere sight of its exterior should act as a check upon his wife. Mrs. Gregory, who, until he held the will before her astonished and angry eyes, had not even suspected its existence, thrust out a greedy, furious hand, and managed to throw it awkwardly out of her husband's grasp, when immediately the wind whisked it from their sight.

Of course, Mrs. Gregory dreaded the existence, and hoped for the destruction, of this paper, while her husband reproached himself bitterly for having risked it to a misadventure, however unforeseen.

When a vigorous search, aided by all the force the proprietor of the hotel could offer, ended in disappointment, both husband and wife were convinced that the paper had been blown to the water, become saturated, and so had disappeared forever. Mrs. Gregory showed so smiling and confident a face at the breakfast-table that Barbara marvelled at her good acting. For once, though, Mrs.

Gregory was what she seemed to be: triumphant over her husband; confident, after a danger past; she believed more than ever in herself, and was disposed to be a charming, lenient Lady Bountiful to an admiring multitude. She had not denied herself the satisfaction of expressing a ladylike incredulity about the paper, assuming that it represented merely so much marital persuasion. She not only looked her satisfaction, but immediately acted upon it.

Mrs. Gregory had already created a fashionable habit, that holds good to this day; indeed, it has become a unique and persistently popular feature of the place.

An admirable part of the hotel is the interior of its broad frontage to the street. Office and reading-room are thrown into one, but so cleverly, that quiet and an air of even sumptuous ease allure lovers of luxury to its lounging-chairs, its soft carpet, its reading-tables strewn with attractive periodicals, its blazing, open fires. All this

towards the end that looks upon the water. The remote portion of this large saloon, though furnished with equal luxury, and not in reality separated, is tacitly apart. Here are the offices of cashier, telegraph, inquiry, cloak-room, etc., boxed off with cherry-wood and mirrors. None of the rough hotel-machinery is visible; no porters with trunks invade this quietness; indeed, no service but the doorkeeper's is to be seen; nothing ruder than a stand for the purchase of cut flowers in an unobtrusive alcove.

When Mrs. Gregory first entered this place, on landing from the steamer, her observant eyes made mental note of all; and she decided that this charm of tiles, mirrors, stained glass, outlook upon the promenade and incoming steamers, to say nothing of its attractive assembly, could be utilized. Why should such delights be exclusively masculine? She soon invaded its once sacred interior, skilfully choosing her people and opportunities; at first, perhaps, only in

the early morning hours, when, with a gay little group of ladies and gentlemen equipped for walking, she would, as it seemed, almost accidentally, wander from the large drawing-room into this reading-room, and, lingering a moment, watch at the glass front a crowd of just arriving passengers from the bay. Another time she would allow herself a little longer period, and even absent-mindedly drop into a chair, which was soon surrounded by the favored ones, until the moments were prolonged to an hour of entertaining gossip. Her example was soon followed by the least conservative, the daring few, until, after awhile, they hardly knew how, the poor men found themselves, not only accustomed to a friendly invasion, but it became the rule that, at all hours, the fair sex, in goodly numbers, frequented this once masculine rendezvous. This was not yielded without a struggle; occasional malcontents, soured married men, of course, used a little emphatic language among themselves when they

found their own no longer exclusively theirs, and some determination was expressed that this kind of thing should be stopped by a lavish use of tobacco smoke. Even, one old campaigning politician would not in the least restrain his voice nor tongue. Having always been accustomed to a certain strong, emphatic speech in manly places, reading-rooms, bar-rooms, offices, there was only that kind of language natural in such places, and he continued to be perfectly natural for an entire season. But even that did not at all discourage the fair invaders. As for the smoke—they liked it, there was none too much for them—and the reading-room became the rage.

It is true, the conventional and conservative at first look askance at this promiscuous gathering, which is the sight they behold on arriving from train or steamer; they always exchange glances, and walk hurriedly through to the sitting-room, with tip-tilted chins and scornful lips. But, be-

fore many days have passed, the most straitlaced Boston and Philadelphia chap—erons discover that “this Bohemian fashion is charming, you know—rather foreign—and, at any rate, people that travel much, as we do, learn not to be narrow-minded. Besides, it is so entirely a family hotel; one meets only the very best people of good form. If they unbend, why should not we?”

Mrs. Gregory deservedly took a little credit to herself for teaching stiff people a rational enjoyment, as she beheld these Mammas Winthrop, Schuyler - VanDort, and Penrhyn, with their carefully trained *débütantes*, duly encircled with clouds of smoke, in this their favorite haunt.

It was again a Saturday morning, therefore a favorable one for a crowd in the reading-room.

Having encountered Barbara Dexter, Helen Boniface, and Katharine MacFarland in the main corridor, Mrs. Gregory, placing her hand confidentially within Barbara's

arm, led her away, begging Katharine and Helen to follow. She was soon the centre of a circle, whose applause she sweetly accepted.

Mrs. Gregory announced a day of *fêtes*, when Helen should come of age, and at the same time come into the possession of her fortune.

"Perhaps you do not know—Helen hardly knows—that she is a great heiress. By her grandfather's wish, she will first hear the reading of his will when she comes of age; and as I know she has grown into a sensible, reasonable young woman, she is not likely to conflict with her happiness."

Mrs. Gregory glowed with benevolence as she announced to her charming young friends her plan for the birthday.

"Colonel Bent, who, you know, is devoted to Helen and to her cousin, Mr. Marcou, will give her a *fête* on the little yacht—the brass band, the Rip-Raps, and a collation. Not enough to tire you, but just a stimulant for

the evening's german, which I shall give her. I am famous for my germans, so"—turning pointedly to the thirty young ladies in her audience—"you must prepare the most exquisite costumes; and I expect you, young gentlemen, to expend half your month's pay in flowers for your belles. Your Uncle Gregory, Helen, will also be here in honor of the day."

Helen had not yet recovered from her surprise at these disclosures, for she had been always treated like a little irresponsible child whose wants were supplied, but who need know nothing of serious matters, and all of this was quite new to her.

Dundas, who had been trying to get near for some minutes, now bent over her chair, and, in a low voice, asked her to go with him. He led her to a little sitting-room, which he had secured, against intrusion; and there another surprise awaited her in meeting John Gregory, her second father. An unusual friendship had always existed between

these two, and he had now to tell this girl how he had wronged her while in the very act of striving to serve her. After the first greetings Dundas asked Helen :

“ You will let me tell your uncle ? ”

But Gregory interrupted. “ Tell nothing until you have heard me.”

Then followed a business-like account of what it was necessary for Helen to know: his own and his wife's connection with Peter Boniface; the morning's loss; and the will which must now influence Helen's future. By the time he had finished, Helen was in his arms, half laughing, half crying, and assuring him, that however it *might* have been, she was quite content, and would not let him be troubled by a matter that was so little a trouble to her.

At this, Gregory thrust her from him, almost a little roughly.

“ That is answered like a child. It is time for you to be a woman, and to be able to consider serious things seriously ; you do

not realize that you must soon act for yourself in important matters."

And she, with a new and pretty dignity, "It is as a woman, and not as a child, that I do answer you. I am perfectly willing that matters shall shape themselves, and am prepared to accept the will of my grandfather. He had a right to do as he would with his own."

"Let me say one word to your uncle," interrupted Dundas. "Helen had promised to be my wife. If she should now throw me over, for the sake of her fortune, that is her right and privilege; but," looking at her with a quiet confidence, "I am not afraid of that. If she will take me and throw over her fortune, I know I can make her a happy woman."

"Why, of course—Hal," from Helen, with a little, happy smile.

XI.

MRS. GREGORY's disclosures, and Mrs. Gregory's approaching german, piqued curiosity and quite engrossed conversation in the coming days. The proprietor of the hotel, who considered it necessary, from a business standpoint, that his guests should always be provided with amusement, considered Mrs. Gregory a valuable ally, and debated in his mind whether he could not engage her services, at a liberal salary, in the coming year. It was intended, of course, that this arrangement should be an entirely confidential one; and he, at any rate, decided that, if only she could be persuaded to return another season, her suite of apartments should cost her nothing.

That enterprising woman was too deeply

engrossed in the preparations, that caused a good deal of correspondence, to be quite, as usually, alert and watchful of Helen. Besides, confidence in herself and her hopes amounted to certainty, in her mind, and she almost relinquished the niece to Uncle Gregory in these days before the german.

A little occurrence came near ending altogether pleasure and hotel at once. Barbara, in fresh, white toilet, Wainwright's roses in her belt, and ready for the evening, tapped, as usual, at the communicating door between her room and Katharine's; but, to her surprise, found the latter still wearing her morning-dress and seated by the open fire, a book that lay between her listless fingers only a pretence for occupation. In answer to Barbara's puzzled look, Katharine pleaded languor and a general inability to exert herself.

"I am not fit for your society to-night, Barbara, and I think I must be alone for a few hours," she said, taking Barbara's hand,

as she stood beside her, and holding it to her own cheek with a soft, caressing motion.

So Barbara left her seated at a little table, on which a lamp burned. Once more in her own room, she threw herself on the lounge with a determined air, and so, though apart, the two young girls spent their evening near each other. Barbara did not make to herself even pretence of occupation, beyond the cruel remark that a little thought might be good discipline for her. This gentle discipline proved rather soporific, and Barbara awoke, after a while, half bewildered, with a sense of suffocation. In leaving Katharine's room, she had left the door a little ajar, and now smoke was curling through this crack. Throwing wide the door, Barbara was appalled to find curtains and window in flames, and the room full of a dense smoke. Already half stifled, she crossed the room and found Katharine lying on the floor, overpowered and unconscious. Barbara raised her, but in the very

act sank herself, gasping and unconscious, with her burden. There was still the sound of music in the pavilion, although it was somewhat late.

Marcou had lingered until certain the MacFarlands would not appear, and then, with a cigar and his own impatient thoughts for company, walked slowly up and down the breakwater. Coming to a turn in his walk, and facing the corner veranda, where he had so often seen Miss MacFarland and Barbara together, he saw a slender tongue of flame licking through a close window-blind, and, with it, volumes of smoke. Giving the alarm as he ran, Marcou was not long in reaching Katharine's room by the corridors, and was easily guided to it by smoke that poured from an open transom. With the force of great excitement he broke open the resisting door, and found himself in an empty room that was being fed with smoke from its neighboring one. He was instantly there, and, groping in the blinding smoke,

stumbled over a prostrate figure. He lifted it lightly, and carried it out through the room he had just left, and on through the corridors to an open veranda, where he laid his burden down. He saw, by the lights of the corridors, that he carried Barbara, and a terrible fear possessed him as he rushed back to the burning room, and, searching, found another, lying still, near the same spot.

By this time the alarm had become general, and the corridor full of frightened people, as Marcou rushed past them with his unconscious burden. He placed her beside Barbara, who, revived by the pure out-of-door air, yet lay with her eyes nearly closed, and, if she had had a taste for pretty acting, might have been gratified at the scene she witnessed.

Marcou, on one knee, supporting K atharine's unconscious figure—incoherently calling her to live—chafing her hands, his own terrified face scarcely less white than hers.

Barbara raised herself on her elbow just as Katharine's eyes unclosed with a bewildered gaze ; and Marcou, transferring her, without a word of apology, to Barbara's care, went in search of better skill than his own, and presently returned with Mrs. MacFarland, whom he had found in a distracted state. Katharine was entirely conscious when he returned ; she looked at him with an inexplicable glance, and gave him her hand without a word, as she lay in Barbara's arms.

Of course there was no returning to the old apartments. After a sharp but short struggle, and some havoc, the fire, which had succeeded in spreading to Barbara's room, was extinguished. However, trunks and other possessions were dragged to the hall, Katharine and Barbara assigned to other apartments a little distant, and only the blackened walls of the two deserted rooms bore witness to what might have been a tragedy.

There were now only four days before Helen's birthday *fêtes*. Barbara made an anecdote for the credulous, out of last night's catastrophe, telling an absurd tale of her incendiarism and too-late repentance; at the end quietly remarking that it could not now be expected that her presence was any longer desirable, and that arrangements had been made to send her home immediately after the *fête*. She announced this as she strolled to the pier.

Her little boat that morning carried an unusual number. Jolly Black had begged to take an oar himself. Helen Boniface, Marcou, and Dundas were of the party.

Little Black, trusting the three friends in the stern of the boat were sufficiently occupied with themselves not to notice his tender speeches, chose this rather public occasion to offer Barbara a cruise with him for life. He urged that their wedding-journey in the little yacht might at once be planned for any port she could name. Barbara took

this proposal as a merry jest, but the little millionaire persistently urged a serious reply.

"This is unkind, Jolly; don't you know it is out of the question?" said Barbara, at last, driven to bay. "I have set my heart upon marrying into the army. Why, only last night, I walked Major Jones Brown-Jones down and up the beach—up and down the beach—for an hour and a half, expecting every moment that he would propose, and he has not proposed yet."

Jolly Black's wooing and Barbara's excuses were so noticeably open and candid that it was not in human nature to be reticent about them. At the assembly that evening Brown-Jones received the mock congratulations of his hundred friends with his usual matter-of-fact stolidity. A queer smile puckered his solemn countenance when he carried Barbara away from Jolly Black, with some show of proprietorship.

"Nonsense must stop now," he remarked to that wrathful little man.

Dennis Wainwright, looking black and sullen, here interposed, and with no conciliatory grace of speech or manner demanded, rather than asked, the favor of a waltz from Barbara.

"Indeed," responded Brown-Jones, "Miss Dexter would not be safe with a man bearing such a countenance. Be off with you, my lad, and I'll promise she shall give you a waltz if you come back after the next in a more amiable mood."

Dennis, looking at Barbara for her reply, had the mortification of being forced to take Brown-Jones's decision or none at all, as she walked away.

When Dennis claimed his waltz, he carried on his arm a wrap of the young girl, and without vouchsafing a word to Brown-Jones, or, indeed, to Barbara herself, at first, he rapidly conducted her from, instead of towards, the dancers, and she found herself

out in the soft, spring air with her silent companion. Really out of breath, keeping pace with his impatient strides, Barbara, not used to practising patience herself, protested. By way of reply, Wainwright conducted her up the sloping path that led to the house on stilts, arranged a chair, wrapped her securely in the cloak he carried, and was altogether so forbiddingly stern and silent, that if Barbara had loved him, she would already, also, have feared him. They both knew that heretofore she had eluded his efforts to speak with her alone and seriously. She was at last forced to listen. Even now, when he used every argument of love, entreaty, reproach, he could not force this wayward girl to be other than the maddeningly wilful creature she had always been.

“What is the use of talking about it?” she said at last, a little wearily. “Of course, I like you very much; but I could not think of marrying you. Can’t you see how impossible it would be? I must marry wealth.

Now, if you were Jolly Black, for instance," with a wicked little pause in her speech.

This was, of course, beyond the endurance even of Wainwright, who burst into vehement reproach, and at last,

"Speak to me at least seriously, Barbara; I am worthy of *that*."

"Well, then, of that, I have little to say. I have never pretended to like you unusually, or misled you into believing I might do so."

"But if some day—"

"Do not talk to me of 'some day,' " impatiently. "Why should I 'some day,' more than now, care for a man who has no real aim in life beyond the mere living on day by day, for the petty pleasures that come in these days? Why, a man should be very much a man when he ceases to be a boy."

Barbara must have herself felt the cruelty of this last, which brought a silence between them.

"It would have been better to have al-

lowed us just to remain friends, as we were," she said, after a pause, speaking gently. "As for me, I shall never be married."

They now rose and walked slowly back together. Before they reached the pavilion Wainwright took Barbara's hand within his two, and it rested quietly enough, even when he carried it to his lips.

"I am not angry with you, Barbara, as, perhaps, I ought to be; and one day you may learn that I am not, also, the idler I have seemed."

He took her to Mrs. MacFarland, and Barbara, pleading fatigue, went at once to her room. She threw herself on her lounge, with the little impatient sigh that no one had ever heard except herself.

"Some more discipline to-night, Barbara," she said.

It was late when she at last took from her trunk the paper that a mischievous wind had blown to a mischievous girl. This she prepared for the mail, addressing

it to Miss Helen Boniface; and then, idling with her pen a moment, drew towards her a sheet of paper and wrote a short letter, a mere few lines, which she also directed and sealed.

XII.

NEVER had Barbara been known to be so gay and sparkling as on the morning of Helen's birthday.

She appeared among the crowd assembled to sail in the yacht, wearing her boating-dress. Wainwright met her, carrying the oars of her own little craft; these he took, and walked beside her.

"We shall see them off, you know," she said to him, "and then I will row you to the Rip-Raps. We have often pulled oars against each other, but I have never rowed you yet." This with almost a caressing smile that set poor Wainwright's pulses beating. He waited patiently beside her, as she talked with group after group of the morning's merrymakers. She seemed pos-

sessed with the very spirit of girlish, frolicsome joyfulness, so infectious that the yacht pushed off to the sound of laughter and saucy speeches tossed back and forth between the crowd on its stern and Barbara, standing on the pier waving her hat.

In the very act, as she stood gazing after them, the smile still tremulous on her lips, she said to Wainwright,

“ I wished to see joy and pleasure sailing away, taking leave of us. You and I do not belong to them—Dennis.”

The young man looked at her with a searching glance, his face flushing with emotion, but Barbara was already turning away to the steps, and he led her down to the water. Wainwright was lifted from the despondency of last night to full hope by Barbara's unusualness to him this morning, and he forgot the past in this hour with her. She rowed the little boat with long, lazy strokes, sometimes resting altogether, and

only drifting while she talked of himself, of his future, of his ambitions, that she believed and wished him to possess; even she spoke a little of herself, touching lightly on the few events of her life still unknown to him. Dennis longed to plead again for himself, yet dared not. Barbara had never seemed so womanly or so gentle, yet a something he could not have defined made it impossible to speak except as she might lead. Presently, when they neared the Rip-Raps, Barbara, with a return to her former gay manner, announced that it was time to rejoin their friends. They climbed the decayed timbers of the old wharf, and were soon winding among arches and heavy masonry of the deserted fortification, guiding themselves to their friends by sound of voices, and there welcomed as though eagerly expected.

Helen and Katharine chanced to be sitting together in an embrasure; Dundas and Brown-Jones were rivalling each other for

their amusement, while Marcou, the unquestioned *cavaliere servente* of Katharine, stood near her; full contentment pictured in his easeful, waiting attitude and his clear brown eyes.

Katharine held out an inviting hand, while Brown-Jones, with an air of stern proprietorship and elaborate courtesy, frowned his shaggy old eyebrows, and, drawing Barbara's hand within his arm, separated her at once from Wainwright; who, poor boy, found himself slipping back into his old jealousy as half a dozen others crowded around and tempted Barbara to saucy, laughing badinage.

He separated himself from them all, and, strolling past one group after another, though frequently accosted, gradually disappeared in the dim perspective of remote casemate arches; and so, in after-years, reproached himself for losing sight of Barbara.

A little later, when Mrs. Gregory was in the full tide of glorious achievement—a

grande dame, with a sufficient following of devotees; all her belles portioned off; not even yet conscious of Helen's rebellion; the collation spread, and the morning a success in every way—she encountered Barbara, in the act of slipping away unattended from her particular group, and put out a detaining hand.

“How now, Miss Dexter, what mischief have you in view at this moment? You would be wise to come into my charge.”

But, by some adroit movement, Barbara eluded her touch, and, with hardly an answering glance, was in a moment out of sight, leaving Mrs. Gregory hesitating, gazing—half-tempted, in a sudden access of curiosity, to follow the girl. Already away from the scattered crowd Barbara quickened her steps, running with impetuous speed in and out among the arches in the direction she had come. So running she encountered one other, Marcou, coming towards her, and both stopped.

To his look of inquiry she replied,
"I have a favor to ask; turn back with me." He at once complied, and she led him, by a way he did not know, through the crazy old wharf, and down to the water's edge, where the little boat lay tied.

"I brought you here to see me off. It is the only favor I have ever asked of you."

Marcou, much surprised, tried to dissuade her.

"I am really very tired, and it is my fancy to go back alone," she answered; and then, with her little odd, short laugh, "I am sorry I cannot offer you a seat. Ask Mr. Wainwright to forgive me for leaving him to come back in the yacht."

All this as she was stepping into the boat and about to push off. Marcou, greatly disturbed, but still hesitant, not really knowing what course to pursue with a wilful girl, expostulated even peremptorily; and Barbara looked up into his face with a timid glance, for one instant seeming to hesitate as she

stood in the little boat, leaning on an oar with which she had been about to push from the beach. Marcou called her attention to a fog-bank that was rolling in from the ocean, and Barbara, looking at it with a girlish shudder of dislike, resumed her wilfulness.

"At least, if you will do this thing, you must not go alone; I shall go with you," preparing, as he spoke, to jump into the boat. But Barbara, with a swifter movement, thrust the little boat quite out into deep water, and now regarded him with a half-defiant, half-tender glance, and, to Marcou's unutterable surprise, two great tears welled up in her lustrous eyes, and fell.

The next moment she was seated, and apparently prepared to row away; the oars held balanced in one hand, while with averted eyes she drew a paper from her belt and said, with a little break in her voice,

"You must not feel troubled; you could not have foreseen this nor helped it. When

I have rowed a few strokes I shall throw this note ashore. Will you find it?"

One more swift glance at Marcou revealed to her his trouble and perplexity, but she was already pulling slowly along, a little distance out and parallel with the shore. Nearing a point of rocks that jutted out from the sands, she threw the paper, lodging it safely on a rock; at once, then, put a greater distance between her boat and the little island, and, without looking behind, waved her hand to Marcou and rowed away.

He, meanwhile, following the course of the boat, reached the point of rocks an instant after the paper fell rather heavily upon it. He found the letter weighted with a long silver pin, a curiously modelled lance, which was a familiar object, worn every day by Barbara at her throat. She had evidently used it to insure her note from fluttering into the water.

A glance at the address showed Marcou the note was intended for himself, and in

the light of this girl's latest freak he opened it with an uneasy presentiment.

There was written :

"DEAR MR. MARCOU—This is really a farewell, and best unsaid, perhaps, but I could not go without wishing to you and Katharine a long, happy life together—

BARBARA "

Marcou, of course more puzzled and troubled than before, looked up from the paper to the direction which Barbara's boat ought to have taken, and was at first surprised not to find it, but a search showed him the boat, turned at right angles from its proper course, and heading directly towards the fog-bank which was rolling swiftly in, and threatening to envelop the Rip-Raps in a few moments. Marcou, terribly alarmed, looked around in search of relief.

The yacht had been sent back to the fort for a forgotten case of wine, and at first it

seemed to him certain that he was, for the time at least, prisoned to the island, but he discovered, around a bend of the large wharf, a tiny pier, which was not to be reached except by remounting the wharf and going down again on its other side. He went with all speed, hoping to find some small craft fastened there. He had already mounted to the top of the old wharf, and was madly jumping from sill to sill of its half-uncovered timbers when Wainwright met him, and was at once roused by Marcou's haste and evident alarm. When the latter, without stopping or turning, only ejaculated, "Barbara," Wainwright followed too in swift pursuit, and the young men arrived at the pier abreast. A fisherman's boat lay there, simply tied by a rope, its two pairs of oars resting in the boat ready for use. Marcou pointed towards the fog-bank in response to Wainwright's dumb questioning, and they were soon pulling in the direction Barbara had taken. It was even

possible still to see her small boat, like a speck, in the distance, and they pulled with all their might. They had not gone many strokes when Barbara's boat entered the fog-bank. Then followed a long, disheartening search, continued many hours. After keeping to the straight course for such a length of time that they *must*, in all common likelihood, have caught up with the wayward girl, they began beating about aimlessly, here and there, in the white mist, calling her name frequently. Once, they saw a dim shadow a little to the left of them, but on reaching it found only two fishermen in a boat of their own. These were easily persuaded to join in the search, and, later, another boat was pressed into the service. Over the water came all manner of sounds—the long toll of the fog-bell from the lighthouse on shore was mixed with fog-horns from smaller fishing-craft; the tinkling of bells on many a schooner anchored here and there; and even deep-

toned occasional whistles of steamers passing up and down the bay—all, sounds to avert danger of collision, but still not the one sound they half hoped, half dreaded to hear. The atmosphere was breathlessly motionless, and every noise exaggerated.

During all this time the little boats of search constantly called to each other, but still without result.

Exhausted, and nearly spent, Marcou proposed a few moments' rest to recover breath, and Wainwright agreed to cease pulling long enough for an understanding and an explanation.

When the young man had told his story, Wainwright listening with a strained, set look on his haggard face, there was a silence between them, and, for the time, a deep silence all around. The fog had not lifted in the least; on the contrary, every moment seemed only to whiten still more the grayness that shut out from them sight of all the world except their own selves, and a

shimmer of half-veiled water on every side. Somewhat beyond them now, they heard a gentle lapping of water against something still not in sight, and pulling towards this sound their hearts leaped up, nearly choking them, when, at first still veiled from clear vision, they recognized unmistakably the outlines of Barbara's little boat.

How awe full was its silence and emptiness to these two men—the man who had loved her, and the man whom she had loved.

The oars lay quietly in the boat as she had laid them, and her hat too, lay beside them.

On the Rip-Raps, alarm at the complete disappearance of three such conspicuous companions was followed by the yacht's arrival, and with it, news from the fishing-boats of what was even then taking place.

There was a sad, silent return to the yacht again, of those people that in the morning

had set sail so differently. Until darkness covered the water they searched in every direction, but unsuccessfully. The fog dispersed before sunset, and the dimpling water showed everywhere without blemish. It was then that they lifted into the yacht poor, senseless, stricken Wainwright, whom Marcou followed in silence.

XIII.

EVEN at the last, Barbara, though silent and absent, thwarted Mrs. Gregory. The night that had been planned so cleverly for pleasure and display was passed in silent regret.

Only the nurses in charge of Wainwright moved about in the small hours of the morning.

Later in that morning, Helen Boniface, handling the neglected mail of yesterday, was startled to find, among letters of lighter weight, a package addressed in Barbara's well-known hand. She carried it unopened into the adjoining sitting-room, that was put apart for the use of Mrs. Gregory. John Gregory sat at a window, reading a paper, his wife at the little desk, writing.

Both looked up as Helen entered, and both were shocked at the awesomeness of her face.

She walked directly to John Gregory, holding the package towards him.

"Break the seal, Helen," he said, kindly, reassuringly, but had to take it from her trembling fingers. He opened the envelope, and the second will of Peter Boniface lay in it—nothing more.

Mrs. Gregory, much interested, drew near while her husband opened the will, and read aloud its contents, by which, without tedious minutiae, Peter Boniface, being of sane mind, did will and devise that on the coming of age of his granddaughter, Helen Boniface, the whole of his property should be equally divided between the said Helen and his grandson, Louis Boniface Marcou.

At the end Mrs. Gregory turned to the niece, with her most winning smile,

"Helen, let me be the first to wish

you joy. You are now your own mistress
—and what is the loss of half a fortune,
when the other half is large enough for
six?”

XIV.

THREE years later found Wainwright a changed man.

He had dropped out from the circle of youth; all his pursuits, even his tastes, if he might still be said to have tastes, were among men of mature life.

He had returned to the office at Washington, listless and pale, after severe illness, yet immediately announcing himself ready for work. Work, and work only, stolidly, doggedly, unremittingly, became his life. He resisted all friendly efforts to coax him back to the world of society. A reserve had settled down upon his lips, and on his life, so that even friends, close and intimate as the Marcou family, saw him only casually, and learned by degrees that he had made him-

self a recluse. This was not accepted without a struggle, for Wainwright was more than an ordinary favorite. His social talents made him eminently fitted to lead the young men of his period; and it had been an accepted fact, that dinners, germans, afternoon teas, theatre parties, were impossible without him.

To Amélie and Jeanne Marcou, the sisters of Louis, he had been considered absolutely indispensable in the past. They were pretty belles, whose father and mother indulged them reasonably in all winter pleasures of the capital. Having early lost the companionship of their own brother by his entering the army, Wainwright had most naturally taken his place. It was only by degrees they realized that Wainwright no longer planned with them choice diversions for the coming days. They were not disposed to take this in good part, or concede a presumed right to his companionship; even they poutingly, almost with tears, com-

plained to their father of being, they hardly knew how, bereft of everything that made dancing worth while; and that, without Wainwright, dancing might as well be given up. Indignation could not be expressed when they were patted and soothed as one would soothe spoiled children, and told, with an amused smile, that Wainwright was no longer for such as they.

The apparently indomitable ambition and genius of the young man after a while made themselves felt. To the elder Marcou, his young assistant had grown to be chief adviser, chief worker, and finally acknowledged equal. It had now become no uncommon thing that Wainwright should be summoned to remote important work, and success followed him in whatever he undertook, with a consequent growing reputation. Even Marcou the elder was baffled in his judgment of this man, who, once possessing a frank, candid, joyous nature, was now self-contained and almost repellently reserved. Since he

had applied himself so sternly to labor, ambition might reasonably have been supposed the key-note of his changed character, but he was cold and insensible to the praise lavished upon him—praise likely to turn the head of so young a man.

He was now, in this early spring, gone to the South, in the interests of a new and important railroad, for the planning of bridges and trestles. His labors were all-engrossing, and late one night he threw himself on the cot in his tent, glad to be tired—too tired, he hoped, for thinking. He well knew that temptation pressed upon him, and he had begun to fear the lonely hours of the night, when resolution grew weak. For what was it but weakness in a man given over to heavy labor of body and brain—boyish weakness—this temptation to take himself once more among the hills, where he could for a day again give himself to a haunting memory? Sleep did not come with weariness this night, and at last he ceased to struggle

with the desire to visit once more the place where he had first known Barbara.

In the early dawn he rode away on his new quest, and when the sun was low, neared the hills that lie around Harfield. He had been riding all day with feverish impatience, urging his horse continually to speed, and now the poor beast showed unmistakable signs of fatigue. They neared a little brook that he knew well, and, here dismounting, let his horse drink, loosed his bridle, and left him to graze. How well-remembered was this grove of fragrant pines! He wandered now from the road, following the bridle-path, soon to lead, he knew, to a moss-covered, rocky nook, where, in other days, he had sometimes rested with Barbara. In the soft, deep carpeting of pine needles his footsteps made no sound. The fragrance of the woods filled him with an anguish of recollection—the memories that he had come to court rushed on him with forceful reality, not all pain. Surely he had walked

here in the morning with Barbara—surely it was only that morning she had made it an especial favor to show him this, her favorite haunt, this place of rocks and running water and solitude among the pines. And now he heard the sound of water, and those rocks began to come in sight through the trees as he approached. Here he would rest, where they rested together; where first this girl had perplexed and irresistibly attracted him.

He approached the rocks and, following their curve, came suddenly upon a shallow brook and, close to its banks, the sheltered, moss-covered bend among the rocks, the resting-place he longed to reach. His approach had been swift, noiseless, and now he found himself there, but an intruder, for, sitting where Barbara had so loved to sit was the figure of a woman. She was leaning a little forward, her hands clasped about one knee; her averted face softly pillowed her cheek on the yielding

moss. The solitude itself was not more motionless. So had Wainwright seen Barbara, in those other days. He arrested his footsteps; only a few yards of low hazel-bushes separating him from the still figure.

She turned slightly with a restless movement Dennis *knew*, and he looked in the face of Barbara herself. The blood surged up from his heart in great throbs, deafening, blinding, and he felt himself sinking away in a mist—so he fell like one dead.

While Barbara, for it had been herself, conscious of some disturbing influence, or half sound, arose and slowly moved away along the bank of the stream, so close to it that her skirts, in passing, nearly brushed the still form lying among the hazel-bushes.

As consciousness slowly returned again, Dennis lay long, with closed eyes, unwilling to waken from the seeming dream. He half hoped this fantasy of a mind diseased might linger with him; that he might in

this dream feel a warm breath flutter on his cheek, the touch of soft fingers on his pulseless palm, hear a remembered voice speak to him with, perhaps, grieved accents. He still carried a pained consciousness of this too real vision, when, in the gathering darkness, he slowly staggered back to where his horse cropped the scant grass, threw the bridle over his arm, and mounted the rising hill to the near town.

At the inn, and among the villagers, he was only a passing stranger, whom none knew, and who asked questions of no one. None recognized in this grave man the Wainwright of another period, who, with others like him, had made friends with the whole countryside in a two weeks' stay years before.

He spent a few hours again among the paths he had once visited in so gay a mood.

Once he quietly entered an orchard by a side gate, and through its fragrant blossoms approached a home that had become sacred

to him. And so he gazed at the irregular stone house—vine-clad, moss-roofed.

A little girl came down its broad steps—a child that he had petted once. Seeing him standing there, leaning against the bough of a gnarled tree, she came towards him and broke a cluster of the pretty blossoms, which she offered smiling. Hand in hand they walked back through the apple blooms, and when, at the gate, he mounted his horse and rode away, she looked wistfully after him, puzzled at the grave look of the stranger.

Some of this Barbara had seen at her window that looked upon the orchard. From behind the chintz of her curtain she saw the coming and going, wondering at herself, while he rode slowly out of the town. She plucked blossoms from the tree, whose branch brushed the casement of her window, and when, a moment later, a tear splashed down upon their petals, a little frown puckered itself between her brows,

and she laughed a low, self-mocking laugh as she murmured, "Some more discipline, Barbara," and returned to her interrupted packing.

Barbara at her trunks, preparing for a visit to Katharine Marcou, folded the dainty belongings one by one into their trays with an eager haste not unlike herself, yet with a glad precipitancy that at last arrested her own attention. Midway in the act of smoothing some obstinate folds to their allotted space she raised her eyes, only to encounter them reflected to her from an opposite mirror, and, after effort to maintain their gaze, her eyelids sank; but not before she had seen their own confession in the flushed, shamefaced, telltale joy of that glance. The shamefacedness was as honest as Barbara herself, and with conviction came the answering pride: "I cannot go to Washington, it is impossible. I will not!"

Long after, Betty, the little sister, coming in from the garden, found Barbara still

kneeling where she had sunk, a limp, nerveless shape; her eyes gazing out upon the distant hills, idle hands clasped before her. Barbara readily yielded to the child's imperative coaxing, and was carried off for a stroll.

"It will be the last time, if you are going to Washington."

"Not the last time, Betty; Barbara will stay at home."

They were now close to the edge of Barbara's wood.

XV.

IF Wainwright had not so completely isolated himself from former intimacies, it is to be supposed he would have long ago learned, through young Louis Marcou and his wife, then stationed in Washington, that Barbara still lived.

Marcou and Katharine were married a few months after Barbara's disappearance, and, by the young wife's wish, made their wedding-journey to the hills, familiar already through Barbara's fervid descriptions. As did Wainwright in later days, they wandered about the picturesque village and its environs in a half-awed, sorrowful way, as though upon a pilgrimage to some shrine. Often recognizing as they went certain spots much praised by Barbara, they would stand close

together, recalling in low tones the gay, wild, lovable sprite that in so short a time had left a deep impression on them.

It was thus they stood one afternoon, under the lights and shades of an elm avenue leading to Barbara's old home. They had walked the entire length of this beautiful approach and were now close to the old house, gazing with an unreal sense of revisiting a perfectly familiar, often frequented, spot.

Meanwhile, they were unaware of being themselves objects of interest to a girl who, lying in a hammock swung from the boughs of two gnarled old apple-trees in the orchard near, had watched their approach, and also had ample time to be conscious that she was about to greet them with honest joy. She ran swiftly to them, both hands outstretched, a glad welcome in her eyes, and on her smiling lips; while they, appalled, confronted this vision with startled, unwilling eyes.

Barbara, checked midway in her hospitable impulse, stood irresolute, puzzled, and Katharine was the first to find voice.

"Can this be Barbara?" in a tone so bordering on consternation as almost to imply reproach.

"Why, yes—I am Barbara," faltering as she encountered a reception, to say the least, more perplexing than cordial; from Marcou an uninviting silence; from Katharine, it was difficult to know what, of strange questioning.

Then there fell a silence upon all three, broken at last again by Katharine:

"We have believed you dead; how can you explain?"

Then, learning from Barbara's convincing eyes her honest perplexity and inability to comprehend, she drew nearer, and with the old, sweet graciousness kissed the lips that quivered proudly.

"Tell us about yourself, Barbara; why did you go away so strangely—and how

were you saved? Sit by me on this seat," drawing her to a rustic bench, "and tell me the whole story—all about yourself."

"Surely I will tell you; it is not much to tell. I think I had grown tired—my uncle delayed his return for me—and so—I just went away. I am not fond of farewells, and it seemed a pleasant way to leave you in the very midst of happiness, and remember you so always. Then, too, I had another fancy—a wish to row all the distance to Norfolk alone. The more I thought of it the more I longed for the adventure, and the more I was resolved no one should prevent it. The night before Helen's *fête* I made every preparation to go away, even fastening and directing my trunk.

"When I moved towards the fog I seemed to be going into an unknown world; and presently, when the white mist was everywhere—no shores, no sounds, except the dipping of my own oars and distant fog-horns—I exulted in my freedom, and rowed

on and on, perhaps vaguely, by and by, as to the direction I was taking, but still straight on without weariness. This heroic state of mind was brought to an inglorious end shortly, by the bells, whistles, paddle-wheels of a steamer that loomed up in the fog behind me, and approached with a speed that seemed unnatural. I tried to put my little boat about, but could not quickly enough, and just before the steamer, having discovered me, reversed her wheels, there were apparently only a few seconds between me and another life. As it ended, my boat was roughly tossed, and even came a little in collision with the side of the big steamer. In the midst of great noise and confusion they lifted me on board and immediately continued their course. My poor boat was already swallowed up in the still-thickening fog, when I found I no longer possessed oars, boat, or even hat. They landed me at Norfolk; but not as I had expected to land.

"Through the services of the stewardess a hat was brought from a milliner, and the next train carried me home."

Before Barbara half finished Marcou and Katharine had telegraphed to each other, by exchange of glances, that they mutually realized the folly of judging Barbara by usual standards, and they ended by judging her not at all. Also Barbara warmed to her tale, and told it as though to sympathetic listeners; her hand lay in Katharine's kindly clasp, and even Marcou had seated himself, listening still gravely, it is true, but only with the seriousness natural to him, and *not*, as was first apparent, with fore-judging disapproval, and standing as though about to walk away. Then Katharine, still encouraging her with a seasonable smile,

"And at home, Barbara—what did they say to you at home?"

"Oh!" a careless laugh, and the old familiar toss of the head, "they are accustomed to me; they think nothing of my ways.

Mother was glad to have me back again, and Uncle John was spared the journey for me. They killed the fatted calf," she added, mischievously, with dawning conviction.

Then came the detailing to this Barbara that had been dead, but was alive again, the ineffectual search that had been made for her, the finding of the boat, and all that followed; even they minutely pictured Wainwright's changed character and career.

Barbara listened in silence to this straightly told story, that was more a sermon than if meant to be one.

- "Am I two people, Katharine? Here am I myself, and then there is the other one. I cannot quite understand what you must have thought of that other Barbara whom you believed you knew."

Then, turning suddenly, almost fiercely, upon Marcou, "Why should you have had such an opinion of me? What had there been in the preceding weeks of acquaintance, that had grown to what seemed like

friendship—what had there been in me to make you imagine I could ever put an end to my life? to make you follow with others in full career, as though to save the life of some crazed woman? I acknowledge”—this to Katharine—“that I am learning; learning, too, with the hard experience I make for myself. Perhaps I shall some day quite learn from the past never to do, just upon my own judgment, the things I fancy at the moment. But”—this with decision—“let there be nothing more about myself. I ran forward to make you welcome. Surely”—offering a hand to each, with the brilliant smile no one could resist, “surely you are married now? May I still be among your friends, and rejoice with all my heart in your happiness?”

And so was renewed a friendship that increased in all following years.

Barbara and Katharine, so unlike in all things, unconsciously influenced each other

as friendship grew into closer and closer intimacy.

This very intimacy caused them to be contrasted and criticised. It was said of Barbara's critics that, after meeting her, they forgot to criticise.

XVI.

THE winter following Wainwright's visit to Harfield Mrs. Gregory—the unchanged Mrs. Gregory—found herself one evening among the guests at a double wedding—to witness the marriage of Amélie and Jeanne Marcou.

She arrived early, and from the centre of a group of her own choosing took leisurely survey of the fast-filling church. Men, women, and toilets offered food for her personal remarks, of which she was not more sparing than of old.

She was entertained on her right by an *attaché* of the English Legation, who divided his attentions impartially between Mrs. Gregory and the wealthy Van Zandt, whose hundreds of thousands and cross

exclusiveness commanded respectful admiration.

Mrs. Gregory, in appropriate undertone, was making herself "too funny" at the expense of fat old lady Peterman, when an unusual buzz and stir announced something of interest.

"Who is that superb woman?" asked the *attaché*.

Mrs. Gregory's keen ears caught the Van Zandt's reply, and, at the same instant, she saw a beautiful woman pass slowly up the aisle, closely attended by Dennis Wainwright.

"She is the wife of our talented young Wainwright. It is quite natural that you observe her; she will always be remarked, that is of course. There is a romantic story about the marriage. It is said Mr. Wainwright, who had courted her at one of the watering-places, believed her dead for several years. One day last spring, after returning from an expedition to the South, young

Louis Marcou persuaded Mr. Wainwright to walk home with him. They entered the study, where Mrs. Marcou was seated at a desk, reading a letter. Catching a glimpse of her husband over her shoulder, she supposed he had come in alone, as usual at that hour, and exclaimed :

“ Here is a disappointment ! Barbara writes that she cannot visit us now.”

“ When Mrs. Marcou, hearing no response, turned fully around, it was to meet a look of startled inquiry on a white, set face. Imagine her embarrassment, Mr. Graham. Here was a man, probably a rejected lover, having no claim, by right, to be interested in the welfare of Miss Dexter—a man of whom, his friends said, he must live down this fixed idea, this memory of a woman who could be nothing to him ; and yet, Mrs. Marcou knew that it had come to her, by a fatality, to tell him that his old love still lived. Mrs. Marcou is a woman all sweetness, wisdom, discretion ; and only such a one is fit to handle a delicate matter like that.

"It will never be quite known how it was all brought about; however it was, Mr. Wainwright went immediately again to the South. They have been married several months, and we are very thankful to her. Dennis Wainwright is a great pet, and she has brought him back among people again; we lost him entirely, for a year or two before his marriage. The Wainwrights are especial friends of the young Marcous—the wives are intimate."

Mrs. Gregory had borne as much as human nature, or, at least, her nature, could bear, and, at this point of the Van Zandt's narrative, quite lost sight of the fact that she was intentionally unknown to that capricious woman. Leaning half-way across the *attaché*, she began,

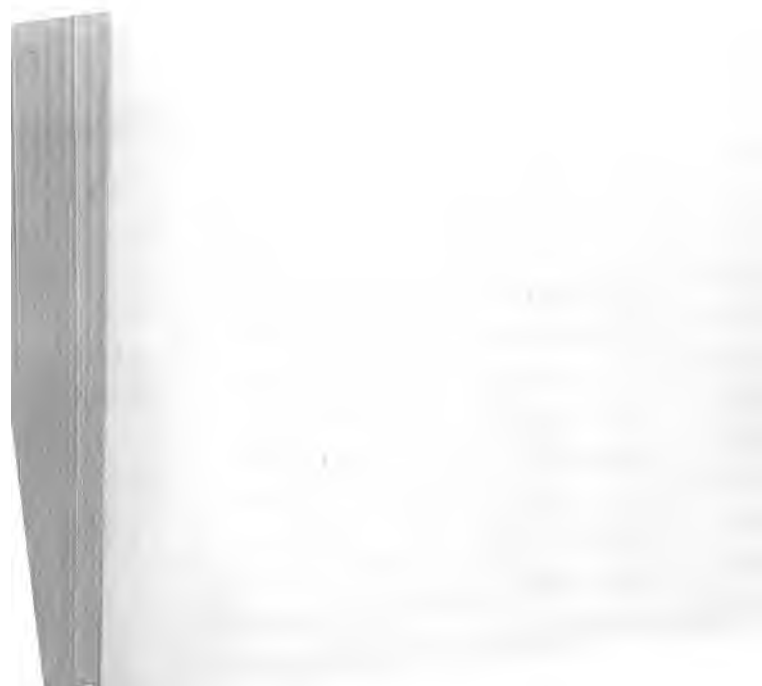
"I could enlighten you as to the real character of this person you call Mrs. Wainwright—"

But Mrs. Gregory was destined never to finish this disclosure; she was literally si-

lenced by a well-bred stare from the Van Zandt (her stare is said to be appalling), and at that moment the Wedding March announced an approaching wedding pageant.

THE END.





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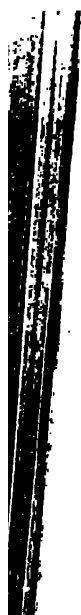
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